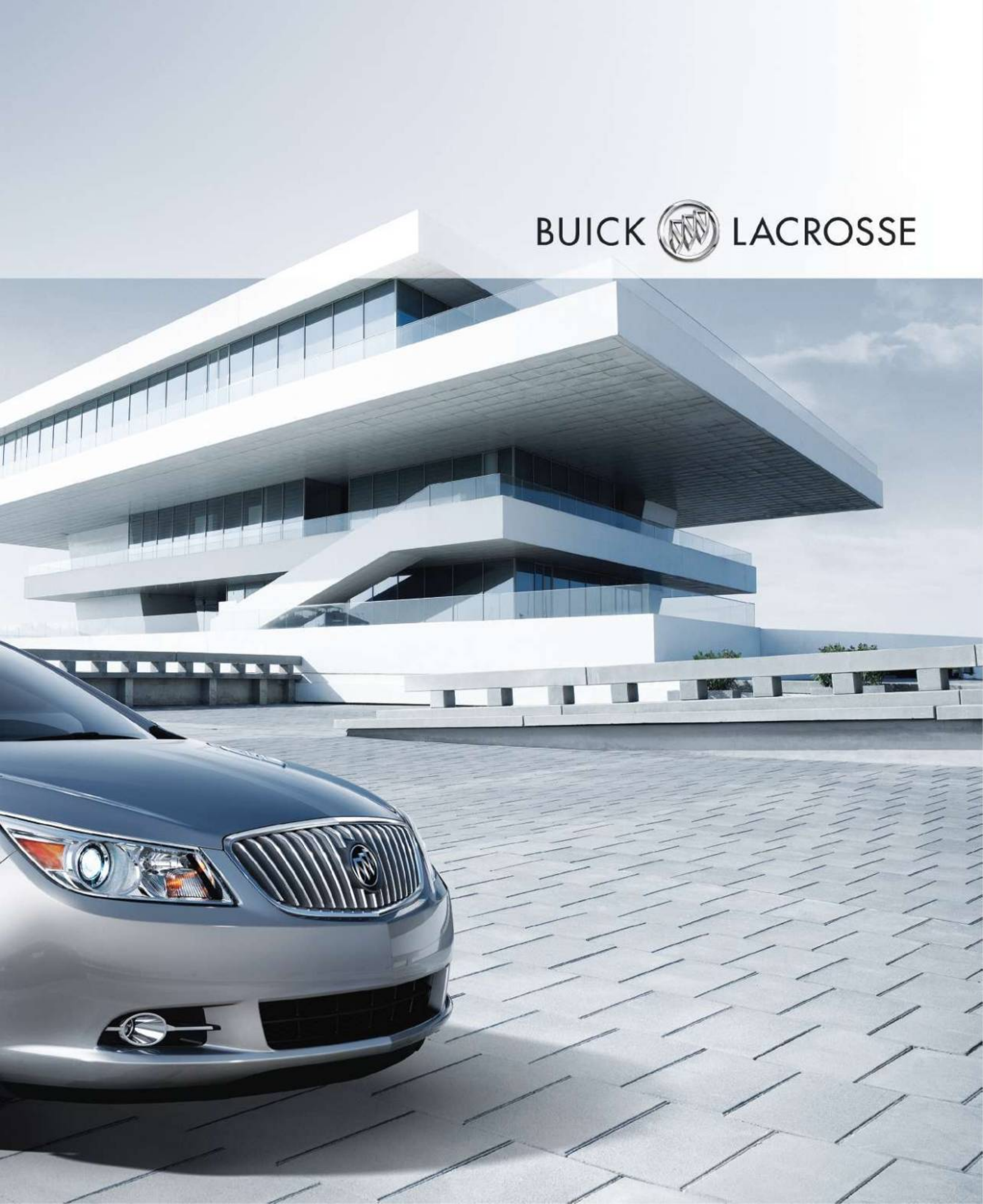

HOW TO EAT AND DRINK LIKE A LOCAL IN L.A.
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SPECIAL ISSUE
Los Angeles
Our tribute to the ultimate food city: dazzling chefs, great tacos, heavenly pizza, classic cocktails, and more; plus 22 fresh, fun recipes
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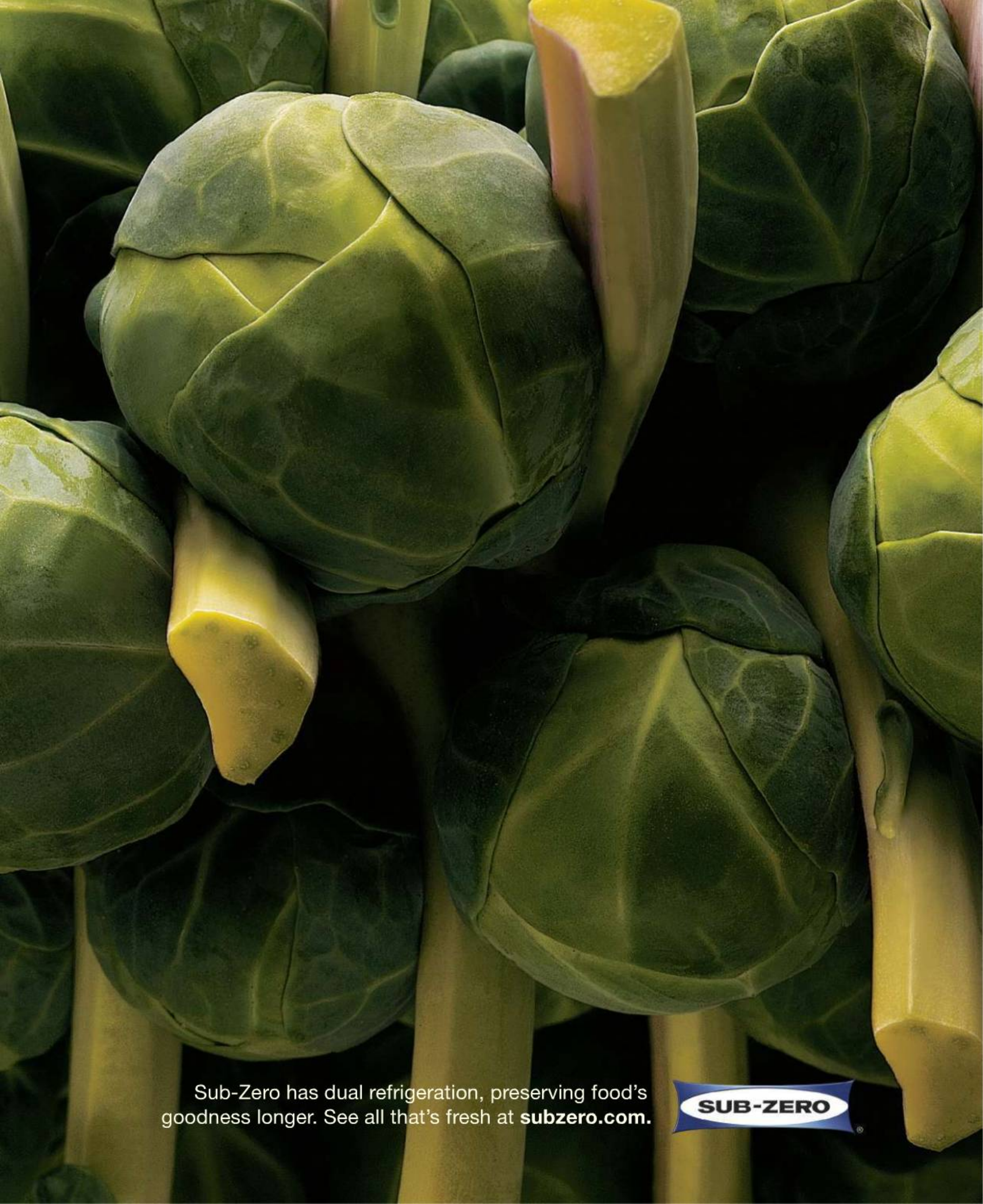
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FROM LEFT: PENNY DE LOS SANTOS; ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI

Cover *Squash blossom pizza from Pizzeria Mozza.* PHOTOGRAPH BY PENNY DE LOS SANTOS

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DEPARTMENTS


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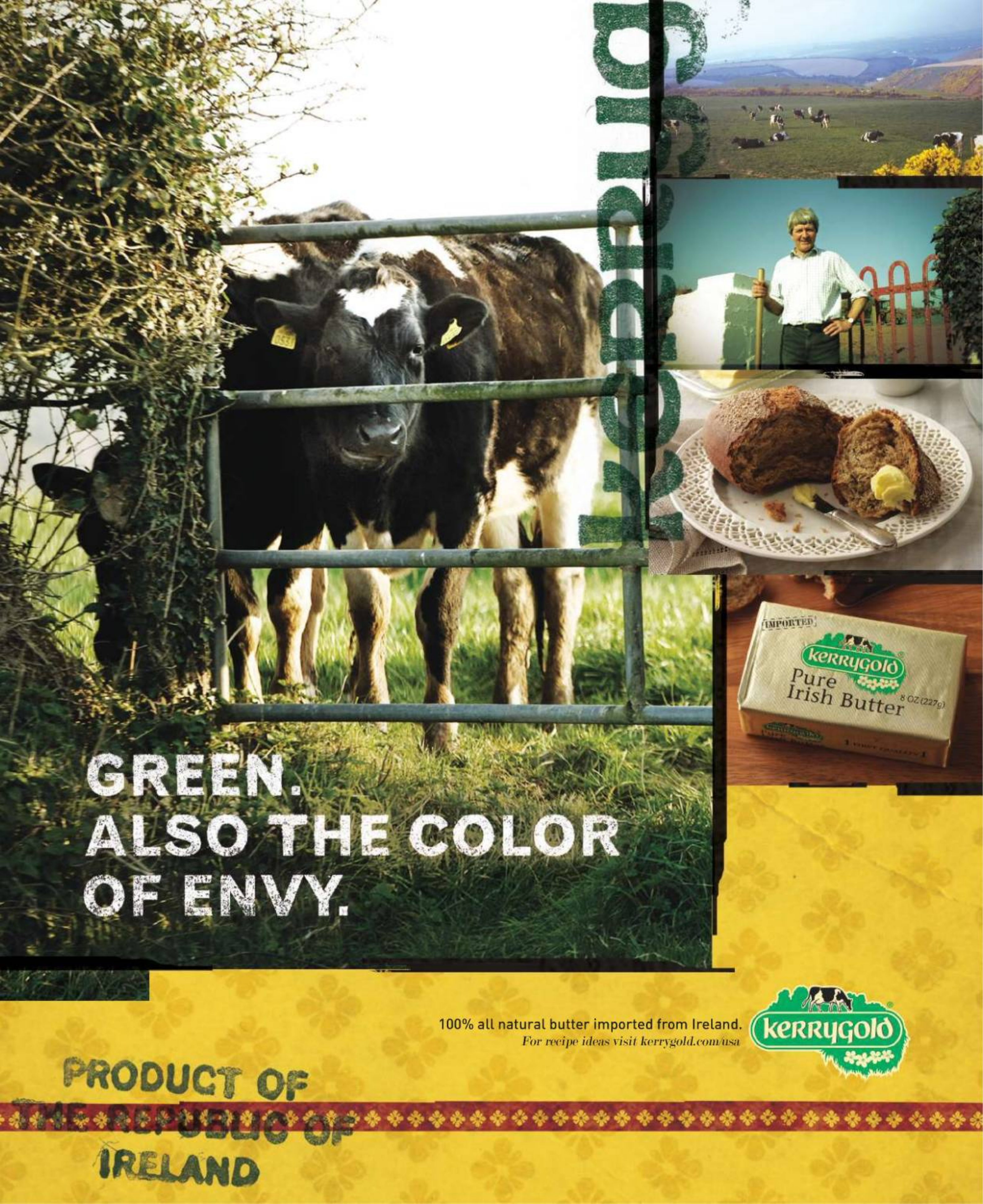
RECIPES

FOR AN INDEX OF RECIPES BY CATEGORY, SEE PAGE 98.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: MICHAEL KRAUS, ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI (2), LANDON NORDEMAN, TODD COLEMAN, TODD COLEMAN, GEORGE ROSE/GETTY, TODD COLEMAN

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>> The chance to win one of five pizza stones from Amazon and Old Stone Oven at saveur.com/win.

>> Everything you need to know about where to stay and eat in Los Angeles at saveur.com/laguide.

>> A gallery of our favorite Mexican recipes at saveur.com/mexican.

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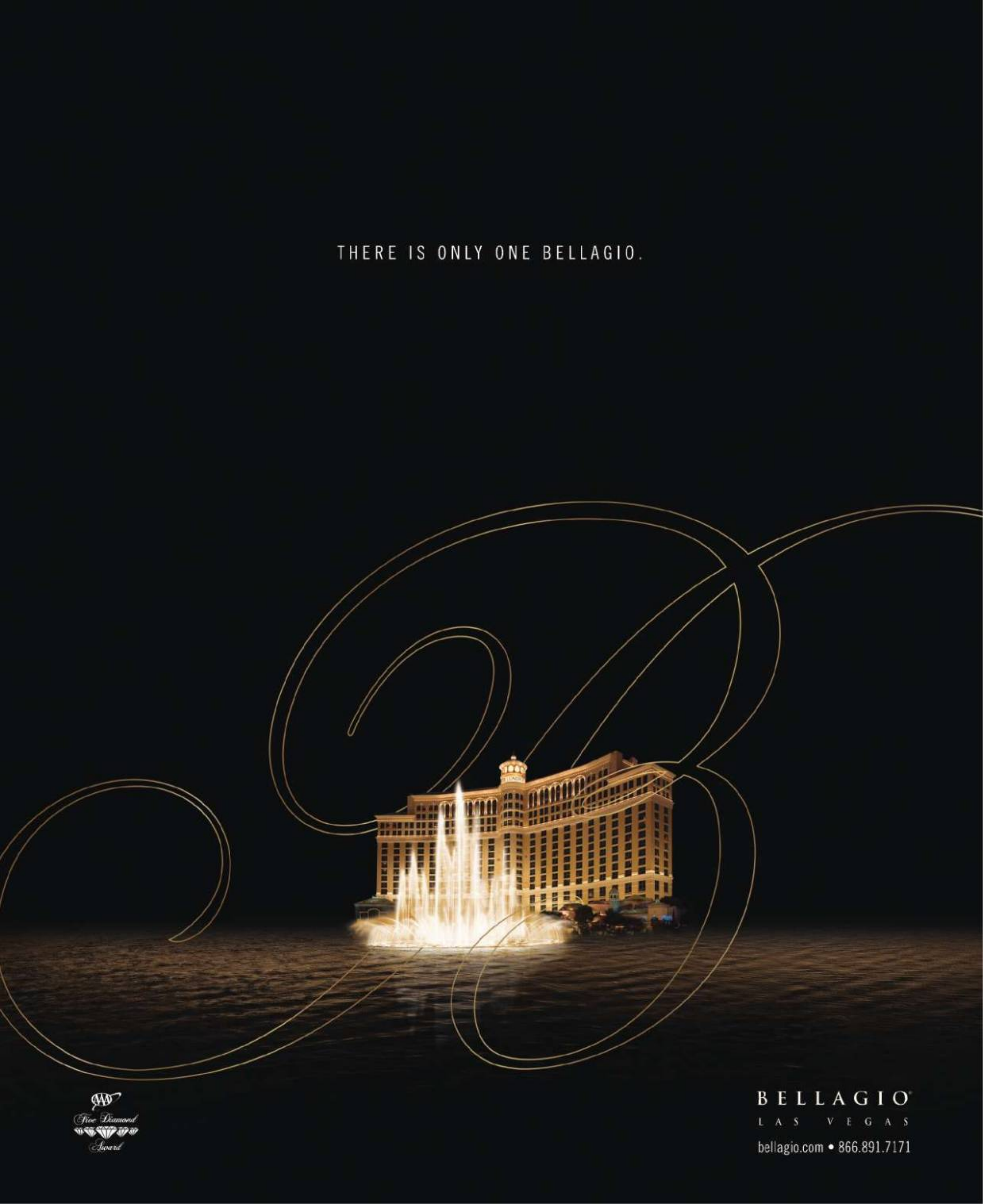
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FIRST

Only in LA

Star maps are fine, but in this city, food is our real guide

GROWING UP IN Northern California, I was taught from an early age that Los Angeles is a smog-filled expanse that is best avoided. I dutifully did so until I was 18, when I decided to take the train to visit a friend at UCLA. We pulled in to Union Station at dawn; I remember walking through the soaring arrival hall and onto the palm-lined street, where I hopped a bus to the UCLA campus in Westwood. The 90-minute ride carried me through an urban landscape the likes of which I'd never seen. It just went on and on and on: Art Déco facades and Colonial mansions and fern-bedecked restaurants and car washes and food stands and restaurants selling every kind of cuisine imaginable. Whoa, I said to myself, what is this place?



Editor-in-chief James Oseland (left) and a friend at a Salvadoran restaurant in MacArthur Park, circa 1985.

COURTESY JAMES OSELAND

Over the next few days, and again on later visits, LA continued to amaze me. When I got out of college, in 1985, I moved there to work in the movies. It wasn't an easy place to like at first; it was different from other cities I'd known, without a center or any obvious street life. I couldn't make sense of it. I did have plenty of free time, though, and I filled those hours roaming the city and eating. It didn't take long for me to realize that there was a *lot* of incredible food in LA. The variety and quality was of a completely different order of magnitude from what I was familiar with. Here were fresh Kaffir lime leaves; here was dry-cured Armenian sausage; here were still-warm handmade corn tortillas that were so nutty tasting and fragrant that I devoured them plain.

I ate out constantly: one day it'd be freshly griddled *pupusas* at a Salvadoran place; the next, it would be Korean-style sashimi eaten with raw garlic and red-chile paste; the day after that it'd be a towering slice of grasshopper pie at the House of Pies on North Vermont Avenue. I'd make visits to Vietnamese markets and eateries in Little Saigon, down in Orange County; even in the '80s the area was a wonderland of Southeast Asian cuisine. Slowly, I started mapping out the city in the one way that made sense to me. Food was my vehicle to understanding LA, and, with so many astonishing ingredients at my disposal, my own cooking flourished as never before.

In 1993, I left Los Angeles for New York, but I still go back whenever I can. I was reminded of just how extraordinary LA's bounty is when I spent six weeks there last year for the taping of two seasons of *Top Chef Masters*, a Bravo TV show I've appeared on as a judge. During those weeks, I did plenty of exploring and also returned to a few of my safe harbors; one of them was Lucques, on Melrose Avenue. At that ever elegant restaurant, I chatted with chef Suzanne Goin for what seemed like hours about our favorite places to shop and eat in Little Saigon. I thought I knew the area, but she gave me the names of markets and restaurants I'd never heard of—some Vietnamese, others Indonesian, and so on. How could I not have known about these places? The fact that I could continue to make discoveries like this in Los Angeles thrilled me, and it's what inspired this special issue. The city makes me marvel at the sheer hugeness of the world of food, at how I'll never be able to know it all. And that's a wonderful thing. —*JAMES OSELAND, Editor-in-Chief*


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FARE

Cravings and Creations from the World of LA Food, plus Agenda and More



The Other KFC

The secrets behind a Koreatown favorite

TWICE-FRIED sweet-spicy chicken has long been a favorite in Korean homes and eateries. Nineteen years ago in a small shop in Gumi, South Korea, a restaurant owner named Kwon Won Kang added his own savory garlic–soy dressing to double-fried wings and drumsticks, and the specialty known as *yangnyeom dak* (Korean fried chicken) took off as a fast-food phenomenon. Today, the business Kwon founded, called Kyochon, has more than 1,000 outlets worldwide, and Korean fried chicken has a global following, most notably in the LA area, where Kyochon has six branches. The most popular one stands in a strip mall on West Sixth Street, in the heart of Koreatown, a neighborhood just west of Downtown. The district is dotted with other Korean fried chicken specialists, places like Chicken Day, with its signature 27-ingredient sauce, but Kyochon is my favorite.

The restaurant's popularity is no surprise. Its wings and drumsticks, served on platters in the brightly lit fast-food shop, are unfailingly juicy inside, crunchy outside, and glazed with one of two delicious house sauces: hot-sweet and the garlic–soy. A totally addictive food, it's lighter, less salty, and less greasy than American-style

ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI

fried chicken. The key, I found out during a recent visit to Kyochon's kitchen, is in the precision frying, which entails steps that are unfamiliar to most Western cooks.

When an order came in, a cook took a batch of unseasoned wings and drumsticks—pared from small, fresh chickens and chilled overnight to decrease their moisture before frying—and dunked them in a thin batter of wheat flour, water, and cornstarch. Then he gave the wings and drumsticks a nine-minute sizzle in a deep-fryer containing 356-degree canola oil, which cooked the meat and formed a light crust. Next, he tossed the chicken in a wire strainer to shake off loose bits of fried batter before plunging it into a second fryer, which, I was told, contained oil left over from the previous day; the darker oil gives the skin a deeper flavor and hue. Three minutes later, the chicken emerged with a delicate texture and crackly crust. Finally, he brushed on one of the two sauces, which are packaged by Kyochon in Korea. "Only five people know the recipes," a cook told me, but I peeked at the label on a bag of the hot-sweet version; it contained soy sauce, red pepper concentrate, garlic, sugar, ginger, and two other ingredients that made me feel at home in the global fast-food world: strawberry jam and "soda pop." (See page 90 for a recipe.) —*Cathy Danh*

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"And we ate the whole pie, and all the cream...and then drove on sleepily toward Los Angeles."

—M.F.K. Fisher, *The Gastronomical Me*





Fruitful Endeavor The orchards may be largely gone, but fruit-bearing trees still thrive all over LA: oranges, lemons, persimmons, and more. Since 2004, the group Fallen Fruit (www.fallenfruit.org), founded by the artists Austin Young, David Burns, and Matias Viegener (depicted above in one of their posters), has been working to get locals to take advantage of the food that is literally falling off the trees around them. Fallen Fruit publishes maps indicating the locations of publicly accessible fruit trees, hosts community jam-making events, plants fruit trees in public spaces (including an orange grove, planned for a Hollywood side street), and is working on an exhibition, running through November, that promises to transform parts of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art into an edible Eden. —*Georgia Freedman*

Family Recipe

A tight-knit clan is behind a popular LA-based hot sauce

The city of Vernon, five square miles of factories southeast of downtown Los Angeles, is all business. Literally. More than 45,000 people work there; fewer than 100 live there. When Jose-Luis Saavedra, a native of Mexico City, arrived in Vernon in 1957, he found work in one of the area's aerospace plants that helped drive Southern California's postwar boom. He never dreamed that one day he would possess a 30,000-square-foot facility of his own or that the product rolling off the line would be hot sauce.



Jose-Luis Saavedra (right) with two of his children, Jacquie and Luis.

Today, Tapatío Hot Sauce, still made in Vernon by the Saavedra family, is found in supermarkets across North and Central America and in Europe. The five-ounce bottle with the sombrero-wearing *charro* on the label is a familiar presence not only at Mexican eateries in LA but in diners, pizza parlors, and steak houses, too. Families purchase it in gallon-jug sizes, and a packet designed for military MREs (Meal[s], Ready-to-Eat) is popular among soldiers serving abroad. It all started in Saavedra's kitchen, where he and his wife, Lolita, began bottling their own, well-balanced, vermilion-hued sauce—a blend of red chiles (to this day, the family won't reveal the variety), vinegar, garlic, and spices—to sell to Saavedra's co-workers. The sauce is robust in pepper flavor, not too

COURTESY FALLEN FRUIT (TOP); LANDON NORDEMAN (BOTTOM); ILLUSTRATION: SCOTT MENCHIN

acidic, and just hot enough. Saavedra called it Tapatío, the nickname for people from Guadalajara, where his children were born. "When I started, my only idea was to earn some money to pay for their education," he says.

That was in the early 1970s, when the economic boom was going bust; the company Saavedra was working for closed, and he found two part-time jobs and a 750-foot rental space. He'd work one job in the morning, head to his rental space at lunchtime for a few

THE BOTTLE WITH THE SOMBRERO-WEARING *CHARRO* ON ITS LABEL IS A FAMILIAR PRESENCE ALL OVER LOS ANGELES

hours of mixing and bottling, and then go to his second job. By this time, his children were old enough to help out at Tapatío after school. His son, Luis, recalls twisting caps onto bottle after bottle. "When I got a blister on one hand," he told me, "I'd continue with the other. That's why God gave me two!"

It took a few years of persuading LA store owners to stock the hot sauce for Tapatío to catch on. "When California's largest food distributor called to make an order,"

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Saavedra says, "that's when I knew it was a success." In the mid-'80s, Luis came on full-time as the company's general manager. His sister Jacquie joined as the office manager, and his sister Dolores took charge of legal matters.

"People think we're crazy for working together like this," Dolores says, "but it's all we've ever known." In the Tapatío offices, the family and their employees sit down every day to eat lunch together, and, as in cafeterias, restaurants, and homes across Los Angeles, there's always a bottle of Tapatío on the table. *—Beth Kracklauer*

Agenda Los Angeles Area

MARCH
6–7
WORLD OF WINE WEEKEND
Temecula, California
In the hills of the Temecula Valley, California's only prominent wine region south of LA, 25 producers open their doors to wine lovers, offering samples straight from the barrel, along with well-paired food. Information: www.temeculawines.org.





APRIL
6
IN FOCUS: TASTEFUL PICTURES EXHIBIT
The Getty Center, Los Angeles
This appetizing exhibition, drawn from the Getty's photography collection, looks at all things culinary through the lens of photographers like Weegee (whose photo of a New York bagel delivery in 1940 is shown above, at center). Information: www.getty.edu.

MAY
22
ARMENIAN FOOD FAIR
Montebello, California
Music, games, and, most of all, food are on offer at this annual celebration of LA's sizable Armenian community. Graze on kebabs, cheese *borek*, the flat bread called *lahmajun*, and baklava. Then learn how to make string cheese and other specialties at the cooking demonstrations. Information: www.armenianfoodfair.com.

JUNE
15
Anniversary:
LAWRY'S SEASONED SALT INTRODUCED, 1938
The meat seasoning used at Lawry's the Prime Rib, a Los Angeles steak house, was such a hit that patrons took to stealing it off the tables. In the 1940s, the Lawry family began marketing the product—a blend of onion, garlic, paprika, turmeric, and sugar—through dairies, as a freebie with a purchase of cottage cheese, a product difficult to move at the time. Now owned by McCormick—and still used at Lawry's the Prime Rib—the ingredient is America's best-selling blended seasoning.



JULY
14
Anniversary:
FARMERS MARKET OPENS, 1934
LA's Original Farmers Market, established on a parcel of land owned by the descendants of Arthur Fremont Gilmore—a dairy farmer turned oil magnate who struck black gold on his property at the turn of the century—started out as a gathering of a dozen growers selling produce out of their trucks. Today, the Market, at the corner of West Third Street and Fairfax Avenue, is a shopping and dining destination for more than 3 million visitors a year. Information: www.farmersmarketla.com.



AUGUST
14–22
NISEI WEEK JAPANESE FESTIVAL
Little Tokyo, Los Angeles
Cheer on the big appetites at the gyoza-eating contest, thrill to the martial arts demonstrations, applaud the coronation of a kimono-attired queen, and eat. Japanese street snacks on offer include *okonomiyaki* (a savory seafood-filled pancake), grilled squid, *yakisoba* hot dogs, and sweets like *mochi* ice cream and blueberry *imagawayaki* (a fruit-filled, layered dessert) at the city's oldest ethnic festival, begun in 1934. Information: www.niseiweek.org.



OCTOBER
16
TASTE OF SOUL
Crenshaw Boulevard, Los Angeles
LA's largest street fair draws more than 100,000 attendees, who come not only for well-known musical acts but also for jerk chicken, jambalaya, and other foods from the city's African-American community. Information: www.tasteofsoulla.com.



HOMEGROWN IN LA Los Angeles and the surrounding region have produced some of our most influential cooks (clockwise from upper left): **Betty Fussell**, the food historian who highlighted regional U.S. cuisine in *I Hear America Singing*, among other books, was born in Riverside, 60 miles east of LA, in 1927. Michigan-born **M.F.K. Fisher**, the author of more than 25 books on food, was raised in Whittier, in southeastern LA County. **Marion Cunningham**, the editor who revised *The Fannie Farmer Cookbook*, updating it with dishes like sushi and tacos, was born in 1922 in La Crescenta, north of downtown LA. And **Julia Child**, the illustrious cook, author, and host of several television series, starting with *The French Chef* in 1963, was born in Pasadena in 1912. *—David Bernstein*

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: WEEGEE/J. PAUL GETTY MUSEUM; JOSE GIL/ALAMY; NANCY BUNDT; PAUL FUSCO/MAGNUM PHOTOS; COURTESY RANDOM HOUSE; BETTMANN/CORBIS; STEPHEN GIARDINA/ALAMY; COURTESY MCCORMICK; INTERFOTO/ALAMY


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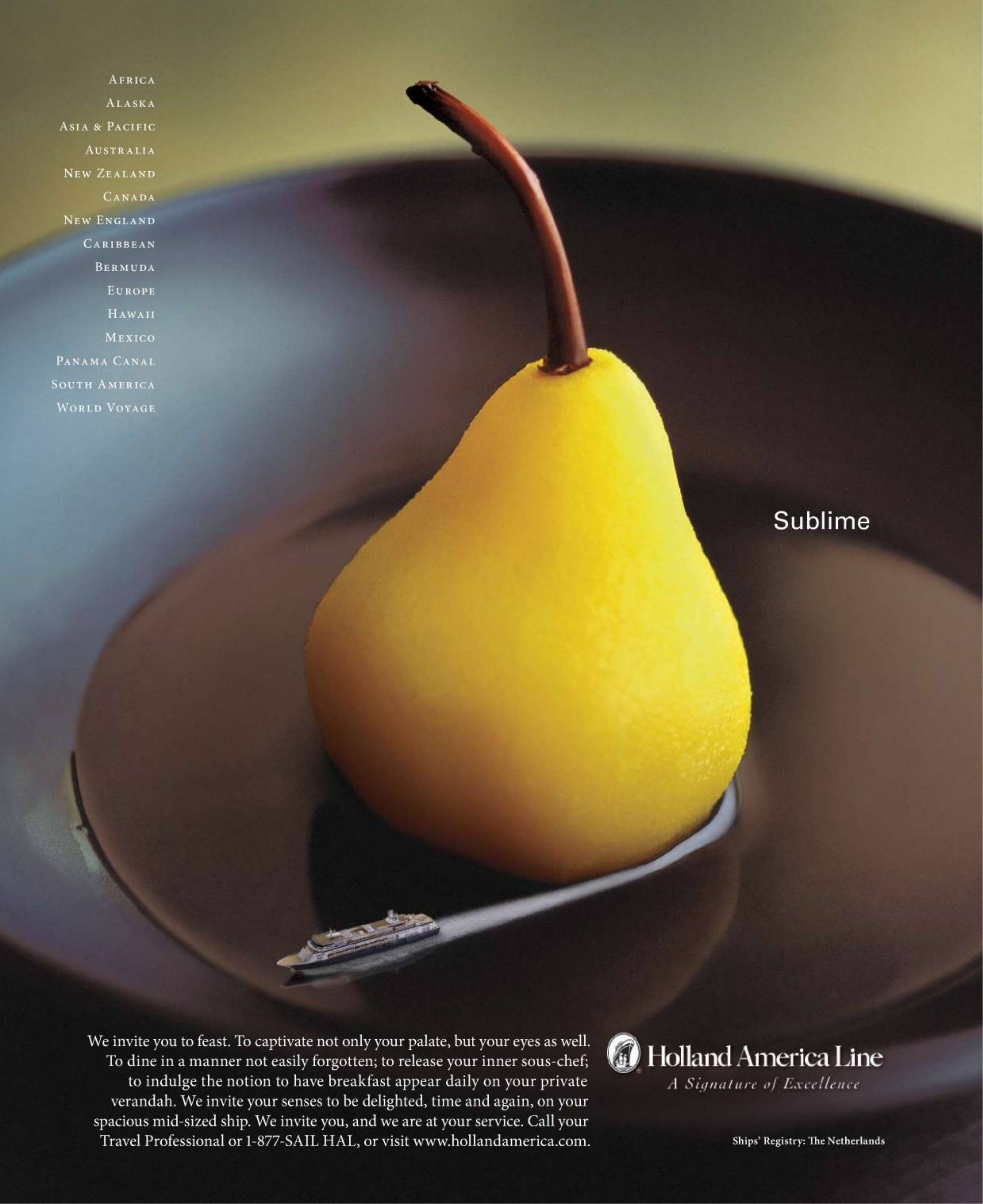


Clockwise from top left: a sign at an LA-area Persian supermarket; selecting lemons in the produce section; *kuku kadoo*, a frittata-like zucchini dish; Iranian home cook Noura Samimi in her Manhattan Beach kitchen; shopping for *sangak*, an Iranian flat bread; preparing the rice dish called *lubia polow*.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: LANDON NORDEMAN (2); ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI; JOSH WAND; LANDON NORDEMAN; JOSH WAND

Learning Persian

I was born in Iran, but until a year and a half ago, I had seldom cooked Persian food, partly because I don't have relatives to cook with in Los Angeles, where I live now. When I married an American man who had never tasted Persian food until he met me, I decided it was time to embrace my native cuisine. Fortunately, LA is home to the world's largest Iranian émigré population, and I was lucky enough to be introduced to one of the finest Iranian home cooks in town: Noura Samimi. A native of Tehran now living in Manhattan Beach, in southwestern LA County, Samimi is widely known for her dinner parties. One day she invited me over and put me right to work preparing dishes for a grand meal; I couldn't have asked for a better tutorial. There was *lubia polow*, a rice *pilau* with green beans and diced beef crusted with thinly sliced potatoes; a sort of zucchini frittata called *kuku kadoo* (see page 90 for a recipe); a salad of cucumber, tomato, onion, and mint; and two yogurt dips: *borani bademjan*, made with broiled eggplant and garlic, and *mast-o-khiar*, made with cucumber. I blended the dips, and Samimi prepared the *lubia polow*; because the beans and meat are cooked with tomatoes, she said, it's imperative to let the juices evaporate so that the dish will come out properly dry. When I told her I'd heard that flat bread was sometimes used for the crust instead of potatoes, she pulled out another pan to demonstrate that preparation. As I mixed the ingredients for the salad (see SAVEUR.COM/ISSUE127 for a recipe), Samimi prepared tea, adding leaves from a windowsill geranium. Then we sat down to eat a delicious meal, one filled with the fresh and savory flavors I remember from childhood. —*Sanam Lamborn*

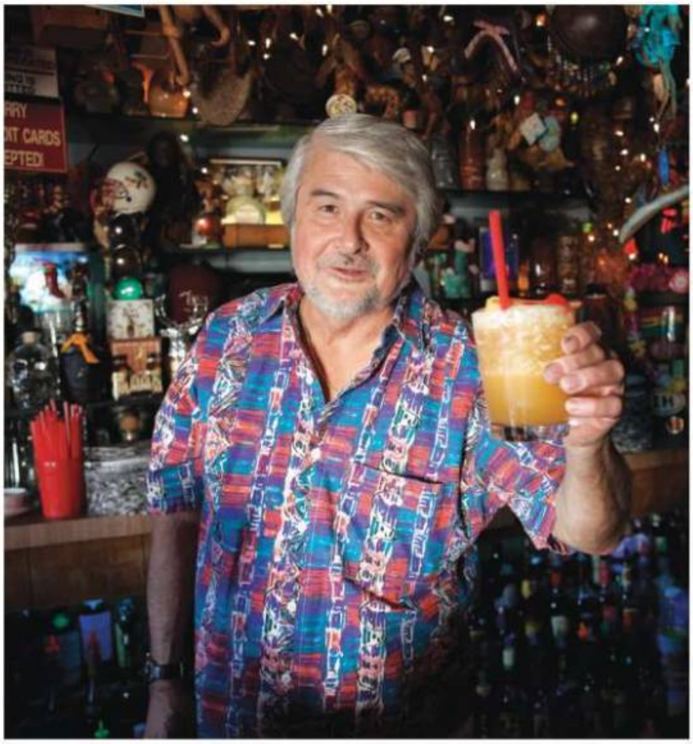

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Spirits of Polynesia

A tiny LA bar keeps the tiki tradition alive

THEY DON'T SERVE BEER. They don't serve wine. For weeks at a time, they don't serve anything at all—whenever they feel like getting sand between their toes, they just close shop. The owners of the Tiki-Ti in the LA neighborhood of Los Feliz are textbook examples of how not to succeed in the bar business, yet for the past 49 years the Buhen family has been slinging Singapore slings and missionary's downfalls for a fanatical following.

My first visit was in 1979. I'd previously dismissed tropical cocktails as slushy "umbrella drinks," but the Tiki-Ti's Navy Grog



folded the umbrella forever. It was a complex creation, run through with striations of lime juice, simple syrup, grapefruit juice, allspice, and smoky Demerara rum. Like many of the Ti's 92 cocktails, the Navy Grog has a unique pedigree: it was invented in 1934 at the first tiki bar, Don the Beachcomber's, where Ray Buhen, a native of the Philippines who arrived in LA in 1930 at the age of 18, was one of the original bartenders. The Beachcomber's "Rum Rhapsodies" attracted a who's who of post-Prohibition Hollywood—Howard Hughes and Joan Crawford were regulars—and kick-started the midcentury Polynesian Pop craze.

Ray Buhen spent the remainder of the golden age of tiki honing his craft behind some 60 different bars—including one custom-built for Clark Gable and the rest of the cast and crew of MGM's

ARIANA LINDQUIST; FACING PAGE: TODD COLEMAN

1935 production of *Mutiny on the Bounty*—all the while amassing an unparalleled archive of drink recipes. In 1961 his wife, Geraldine, and son, Michael (left), helped him to transform the east side storefront that had once housed his father-in-law's musical instrument repair shop into the Tiki-Ti, a hideaway chock-full of tropical artifacts.

The Tiki-Ti's signature cocktail, a passion fruit–and–lime–flavored rum cocktail called Ray's Mistake, was born in 1968, when Buhen put the wrong syrups into a customer's Anting Anting (a drink whose name means witches' brew in Tagalog, a language of the Philippines), and the customer told Buhen not to bother fixing it. Other Buhen family inventions go by such names as Hawaiian Twist, Pink Fire, and Puka Punch, a kitchen-sink brew containing three rums, three juices, and two syrups, among other ingredients (see page 92 for a recipe).

Ray died in 1999, but Michael and his own sons, Mike and Mark, keep his spirit alive. Every Wednesday evening at nine, Mike Buhen Sr. rings a bell and leads the room in a toast to his dad, whom he calls the Master Ninja. Though not as many stars stop by as in the 1960s, when Marlon Brando popped in frequently, the Tiki-Ti continues to serve the east-side bohemians, downtown office workers, USC students, and suburbanites who pack the tiny, 24-seat room tighter than Michael's lips when you ask him the exact ingredients in a Ray's Mistake. After 30 years I still can't deconstruct that recipe. —*Jeff Berry*

THE PANTRY, *page 100: Information on visiting Kyochon and Tiki-Ti and on purchasing Tapatío hot sauce and Moraga wines.*

Two Good Bottles In the 1830s, the Bordeaux-born viticulturist Jean Louis Vignes, California's first commercial wine producer and my great-great-great-great-grandfather, recognized that the Los Angeles *terroir* was much like that of his childhood home and decided it was a fine place to grow French grapes. More than a century and a half after Vignes's first vintage, the husband-and-wife growers Tom and Ruth Jones, and the wines they produce at Moraga Vineyards on their 16-acre estate in the Bel Air hills, are still proving him right. Moraga vines, one of more than 40 small vineyards in the Los Angeles area, are planted on slopes that were, long ago, seabed; the marine fossil–filled soil and cool canyon nights create the conditions for two Bordeaux-quality wines: a luscious cabernet sauvignon–merlot blend and a finely balanced sauvignon blanc. Harvested late in an unusually cool year and aged for 18 months in new French oak, the big 2005 red ($125) is bursting with both black and red fruits, along with tobacco and a hint of cake spices, but its juiciness is balanced by moderate tannins and Moraga's characteristic minerality; it demonstrates tremendous grace for its size. Cellar it, or drink it now; it's a deft partner for any rich meat dish, or even foie gras. A warm, dry 2007 growing season, on the other hand, produced a deliciously nuanced white wine ($65), with a nose full of flowers and apricot and a mouth of citrus and flint that gives way to peaches and cream on the finish. It's brilliant with butter- or cream-sauced seafoods. —*Kendra Racouillat*



ESSAY

Nights on the Town

A short history of fine dining in Los Angeles

BY PATRIC KUH



I LOVE DUSK IN LA, that moment just before restaurants open for dinner. A waiter runs to work, toting his white shirt on a hanger. A kitchen crew wolfs down a quick meal at the empty bar. A parking valet rolls out the pavement stand. The scent of night-blooming jasmine is in the air, and all over the city, against an evening sky whose colors are unique to this part of Southern California, the lights are coming up. They click on in the recessed nooks of a sleek sushi joint. They sparkle on a chandelier in an old-school French restaurant somewhere in the San Fernando Valley. They shine from sconces in a west side bistro. And, everywhere, there's the neon: "Cocktails," "Steaks and Chops," "Seafood." Night falls, and, feeling the first pangs of hunger, you are faced with that most pleasant of quandaries in LA: Where should we eat?

As a restaurant critic, I spend hours each day driving around this city, asking myself that very question, the same one Angelenos have asked themselves since the earliest days of fine dining in LA. And I spend just as much time sitting in crowded restaurants, considering the service, the food, the setting, and wondering what makes restaurant culture here so different from that of any other city in the world. It's no secret that LA's upscale restaurants tend to be more casual and more outwardly trendy than those you find in other great food cities, or that the cuisine here is often lighter and more far ranging. But, why? What made it so?

Clockwise from top left: the gossip columnists Hedda Hopper and Louella Parsons, Princess Conchita Pignatelli, and the actress Sofia Loren at Romanoff's in 1957.

PATRIC KUH *is the restaurant critic for* Los Angeles *magazine and the author of* The Last Days of Haute Cuisine *(Viking Adult, 2001).*

LEFT: TIME & LIFE PICTURES/GETTY IMAGES. FACING PAGE, FROM LEFT: LANDON NORDEMAN; TODD COLEMAN

IT'S OKAY NOT TO have too much of a history in Los Angeles. In fact, being without one is something of a tradition. The past here need reach no further back than the moment the lead character (in drop-dead heels, please) steps off the 20th Century Limited at Union Station and onto the palm-lined street. Over the course of the past hundred years or so, when it came to restaurants in LA, things could quickly get funny. Nothing was native here, so borrowed themes took on their own, distinctive character.

Consider L'Orangerie, the venerable and now defunct French restaurant on La Cienega Boulevard. Until it closed, a few years ago, you could treat yourself to a fine meal there, shielded from traffic by boxed hedgerows, and find that the evocation of the court of Versailles was in no way hampered by the working oil wells down the street. And still today, in the Atwater Village neighborhood, one can have a good prime rib at the Tam O'Shanter, an institution that dates from 1922 and has an interior modeled after a Scottish peasant hut: sagging roof, bulging walls, soot-darkened mantel. The original designer, Harry Oliver, didn't have any actual link to the Scottish Highlands; he'd perfected the look on Culver City movie lots.

Some call that superficiality; I call it lightness, the defining characteristic of LA dining. The knock against us as a city is that we're not real epicures, that we are health-obsessed weenies who care only if there's a star in the vicinity and will hardly eat because we must be doing squat thrusts at dawn up a canyon. The truth is that we are engaged by food but pair that passion with a sense of fun. It's not fakeness that bothers us but fakeness without heart.

True, like every other place in America, we once had our potted-palm dining rooms where classical French food might be enjoyed, but one can only wonder whether the Angelenos who ate at those places took all that saucy food at face value or whether they thought it was just a bit of show business. With the rise of the motion picture industry in the 1920s, fantasy became part of the landscape of everyday life in LA, and the theme restaurant took root. At the Jail, a restaurant that opened in 1925 in Silver Lake, the waiters dressed as inmates. At Ye Bull Pen Inn, which opened in 1920 downtown, customers dined in rows of livestock stalls. No matter what the theme, most places served comfort-food classics, like fried chicken and steak. But at Don the Beachcomber, which opened in 1934 and kicked off a nationwide tiki trend, the Polynesian menu matched the setting.

And while not every eatery in town banked on fantasy—downtown LA in the 1920s was crowded with sterile-looking cafeterias that catered to the sober tastes of the hundreds of thousands of Midwesterners who were flooding into the city at the time—the movie business was the engine that drove our fine-dining culture for much of the 20th century. In the early years, the stars gathered at night in places like the swank Cocoanut Grove, in Midtown's Ambassador Hotel, where their comings and goings, documented in newsreel images in thousands of movie palaces, kept the rest of the country fixated on what was happening out here. In those flickering images was the inkling that Los Angeles, once a remote, dusty pueblo, was now a place with a vibrant culture all its own. It would take a few years, however, for that culture to find expression in food.

WELL INTO THE 20TH CENTURY, the fanciest restaurants in LA, like those in the rest of the country, were still looking to Europe for their models. Places like Perino's—an Italian-owned restaurant on Wilshire Boulevard with a lengthy, haute-Continental menu—were still considered the epitome of stylishness in the 1940s and 1950s. When it came to food, imported cuisine was fine, but Angelenos of certain means eventually came to expect something more—a little sleight of hand, a memorable character. Romanoff's, which opened in 1941 on Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills, delivered both, in the person of owner "Prince" Mike Romanoff. The self-styled Russian royal was actually Herschel Geguzin, an orphaned son of a Cincinnati tailor. Everyone knew he was a fraud, but no one cared. On the contrary, guests seemed to admire him for his chutzpah.

Mike Romanoff's success also owed to this: he knew that for all of Hollywood's glamour, the inner workings of the city amounted essentially to a bunch of hard-nosed men eating lunch. Romanoff's, accordingly, was a boys' club, complete with stiff drinks, deep booths, rich French food, and waiters who were models of discretion. Cigarette girls roamed the big back room; the coveted five tables opposite the Art Déco bar were reserved for the real movers and shakers, and for Romanoff himself. In 1949, M.F.K. Fisher, not yet a doyenne of the food world but a recently divorced sometime screenwriter, expressed admiration for the restaurant's breeziness and pragmatism. "The attitude seems to be," she wrote in her book *An Alphabet for Gourmets*, "that all humans must eat, and all humans must make money in order to eat, and therefore the two things might as well be combined."

Romanoff had recognized an essential facet of LA culture, but an older restaurant had already begun to break through and represent something even more intrinsic about

LA Restaurant Milestones

1852 La Rue's, considered by some historians to be Los Angeles's first restaurant, opens for business. The establishment has mud floors and six wood tables and, according to one account, serves food that is "poorly cooked but generally served."

1908 The first French dip sandwich is said to be served, in downtown LA. By whom is a matter of dispute: two restaurants that open this year—**Philippe's** and **Cole's**— claim to be the sandwich's birthplace. (A Cole's sandwich is pictured at left.)



1919 Joseph Musso and Frank Toulet open what will become **Musso and Frank Grill**. On the strength of classic dishes like flannel cakes and Welsh rarebit, it will survive as the oldest restaurant in Hollywood.

1926 Herbert Somborn and Wilson Mizner open the original **Brown Derby**, a restaurant shaped like a bowler hat, on Wilshire Boulevard. Three more branches open between 1929 and 1941; only the Los Feliz location, which is declared a Historic Cultural Monument by the City Council of Los Angeles, still stands. The Cobb salad, named for the restaurant's second owner, Robert H. Cobb, is invented here in 1936.



Los Angeles. The Brown Derby had opened across the street from the Cocoanut Grove back in 1926; with its exterior shaped like a giant bowler hat, it seemed to hint at the extravagances of the theme restaurant, and, filled with movie stars, it certainly had élan, but over the years it had gained a reputation for its tasty food. It wasn't fancy: pan-fried corned beef hash was a popular dish, as was the grapefruit cake with cream cheese frosting. The most famous dish, the Cobb salad, didn't skew European at all. It is hard to think today of iceberg lettuce, watercress, chicory, romaine, bacon, and avocado as being original, but it was a brilliant combination, as perfect as blinis and caviar, hollandaise and *filets de sole*, and certainly more interesting than any ersatz European grandeur hashed up under dusty chandeliers.

While the Brown Derby had begun to unmoor LA's fine dining from Europe's, it took a restaurant called Chasen's to cut the ropes. In the 1950s, by which time LA had become an important enough city that the Dodgers decamped there from Brooklyn, this low-slung Beverly Hills restaurant was becoming the place to be seen. Its most famous dish wasn't *coquilles St-Jacques* or chicken quenelles; it was a bowl of chili sprinkled with diced raw onion. Running a close second was the hobo steak, a New York strip steak cooked tableside in copious amounts of butter. Like Romanoff's, Chasen's had a manly brusqueness, but unlike Romanoff's, it rejected dynastic pretensions. Actually, Chasen's wasn't really very good. (My aunt, a onetime Vegas showgirl and not one for moist-eyed nostalgia, once summed matters up saying, "Patric, the only things worth having at Chasen's were the garlic bread and the decaf.")

The only time I ever visited Chasen's was in 1999, four years after it closed. The restaurant where Ronald Reagan had proposed to Nancy, where Orson Welles had hurled a flaming chafing dish at the producer-actor John Houseman, was auctioning off all its furnishings. I walked into the massive structure on Beverly Boulevard, with its weird white columned exterior and its green-and-white-striped awning that stretched to the curb, and there it all was: the silver crab forks, the butter holders, the golden cocktail stirrers, laid out and tagged with lot numbers. In the dark, wood-paneled interior, I got a sense of why that bowl of chili with diced onions had been so important. It announced that fine dining, with all its trappings, could be made in America. What remained to be figured out was whether fine dining in Los Angeles could be made to reflect not just America but this particular corner of California.

It could be argued that LA's unique brand of California cuisine was born on a patch of farmland outside Los Angeles, where a Cordon Bleu graduate named Michael McCarty and a chef named Jean Bertranou, who'd brought nouvelle cuisine to LA with his West Hollywood restaurant L'Ermitage, began farming ducks for foie gras. McCarty had fallen in love with French cuisine as a teenager but was intent on expressing that love in a local dialect. He opened Michael's in Santa Monica, three blocks from the ocean, in 1979. In a complete departure from the upscale chop house vibe of places like the Brown Derby, Michael's had a back garden that was suffused with sunlight in the afternoon. Yes, there was foie gras, but it was served by waiters in pink button-down shirts alongside California-made *chèvre* and wines. Whereas Chasen's could have been mistaken for Manhattan's '21' Club, Michael's couldn't have existed anywhere but Southern California.

The confluence of graceful outdoor living and expensive modern art, of baby vegetables and understated affluence, was the sexiest encapsulation of modern American cooking yet. But McCarty was more than a showman. He was a mentor who believed in his mission of channeling the rigors of French cooking into something new. The LA pastry chef and restaurateur Nancy Silverton—one of a number of now famous alums of Michael's, including the chefs Jonathan Waxman and Ken Frank—recalls McCarty's taking her aside and saying of the mousse she was making, "It's too French." The dessert was over-aerated, he explained; he wanted more concentration of flavor. The moment was an epiphany, Silverton says, a turning point that would lead her toward her signature, rustic style of baking. "Suddenly, I understood that there was a difference between a good French pastry and a good pastry based on French technique."

Michael's had started a transformation, but to start a revolution, it would take a chef who really had something to rebel against. In fact, it took a European truly to see Southern California's singular lifestyle and incomparable natural bounty for what they were. A few years before McCarty got his restaurant off the ground, a 30-year-old Austrian cook named Wolfgang Puck was living in a rented room with sheets on the windows and an *Emmanuelle* poster on the wall. Puck was a culinary hired gun. Before coming to LA, he'd worked at dowagers of haute cuisine like Maxim's in Paris and the Hôtel de Paris in Monte Carlo; once here, he got a job at Ma Maison, a Melrose Avenue restaurant that was the height of style in the mid-1970s. Certainly, the place was a change of pace for Puck: the dining room had an Astroturf floor,

1931 Clifford and Nelda Clifton open **Clifton's Cafeteria**. Part self-serve restaurant, part amusement park, the hunting lodge–themed establishment features a waterfall, among other attractions, as well as a prayer chapel. Prayers, pies (right), and turkey platters are still offered there today, as are free or cut-price meals for customers in need.

1934 The bartender Ernest Raymond Beaumont-Gantt



opens **Don the Beachcomber**, the world's first Polynesian-themed restaurant. It serves fruity rum cocktails with names like Cobra's Fang and Zombie, as well as egg rolls and Chinese spareribs. Fifteen more locations will follow, as will scores of local imitators, including places like the Seven Seas, the Islander, and the Luau.



1932 Brothers Leon, Bernard, Martin, and Jack Schwab, all pharmacists, convert a failing drugstore on Sunset Boulevard into a soda fountain shop. **Schwab's Pharmacy** (left) becomes a movie industry hangout. Charlie Chaplin comes in to make his own milk shakes, Gloria Swanson buys her makeup



THIS PAGE, FROM LEFT: LARRY NIGHSWANDER; MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVE/CORBIS; TODD COLEMAN. FACING PAGE, FROM LEFT: TODD COLEMAN; GEORGE ROSE/GETTY IMAGES.

and the owner, a Frenchman named Patrick Terrail, was known to sport an elegant suit with sandals and white socks. But by Puck's own admission, the kitchen was still doing a butter-with-more-butter style of cooking.

Puck became famous at Ma Maison anyhow, publishing a popular book on French cookery in 1981 called *Modern French Cooking for the American Kitchen*. But with Spago, which he opened the following year, he became a legend. The first iteration of the eatery was located on Sunset Boulevard in what had been a Russian-Armenian restaurant. Puck saw it as something casual—the dining room had checkered tablecloths—and while there were certain connections to Alice Waters's Chez Panisse (the same German bricklayer had made both restaurants' pizza ovens, and they had the same enthusiasm for the produce of California), at first glance there wasn't anything momentous about it. But Spago was unlike anything LA had seen before. Here was a chef who had been raised on the French "mother sauces" and had chosen not to use them. Instead, he installed a grill and had a truckload of almond tree wood delivered weekly. In the kitchen, he fostered an atmosphere of pure improvisation. The chef Mark Peel, who had come over from Michael's to work as head chef, recalls the manic opening night. "We cooked with the menus propped in front of us to remember what the ingredients in the dishes were," he says. This was not cooking from a playbook that had been slavishly passed down from one chef to another.

By the time I moved here, in 1988, Los Angeles's role as a brilliantly inventive restaurant city had been cemented. I came as a cook, not a critic, carrying with me well-worn knives from Dehillerin in Paris, where I'd worked for Guy Savoy, and from Bridge Kitchenware in New York, where I was a line cook at the '21' Club. Now the energy was pointing west. Everything seemed to be in flux when I got here. Even at the city's older, well-loved places like Valentino, in Santa Monica, chefs were changing their stripes. When Valentino's owner, Piero Selvaggio, opened the place back in 1972, it was a typical high-end *ristorante* with plenty of tableside pyrotechnics. "We didn't use anything like buffalo mozzarella," he recalls. "Mozzarella was something breaded and fried." But by the time I visited, Selvaggio was wheeling an olive oil cart around his dining room, pouring samples over bruschetta so that customers could appreciate the differences between regional oils.

IN THE MID-1970S, WOLFGANG PUCK WAS LIVING IN A RENTED ROOM WITH SHEETS ON THE WINDOWS AND AN *EMMANUELLE* POSTER ON THE WALL

I got a job on the line at Citrus, a new restaurant that the French-born chef Michel Richard had just opened among the production houses and sound stages in the raggedy southern end of Hollywood. At Citrus, Richard wasn't just mining the local terrain for the freshest beets or handmade charcuterie; he was going to the Thai grocery down the block and coming back to the kitchen with lemongrass and coconut milk. He was shopping at Armenian markets and bringing back things like *katafi* (shredded phyllo dough), which most of us had never seen before, and wrapping local Dungeness crab cakes with the stuff. One day, he became fascinated by watching one of the Salvadoran prep cooks eating a chayote salad. A few days later, we were plating up chayote slaw.

That you could play with culinary genres like that had become a given. Everyone was blurring boundaries: there was Roy Yamaguchi mingling Hawaiian foods like *ahi* and macadamia nuts with European techniques at his restaurant 385 North in West Hollywood (and later at the LA branch of Roy's); Nobu Matsuhisa melded Latin American ingredients with traditional sushi at his namesake restaurant in Beverly Hills; and at the Melrose Avenue eatery Border Grill, which opened in 1985, Susan Feniger and Mary Sue Milliken freely interwove strains of regional Mexican cuisines in homage to LA's countless great *taquerías*. In a way, this sort of eclecticism was right at home in a city where fantasy and invention, rather than history and tradition, had formed the foundation of high-end dining.

By the end of the 1980s, LA was home to innovative restaurants that boasted an equally novel asset: homegrown talent. When Campanile opened, a few blocks north of Wilshire Boulevard, in 1989, its planked salmon and its grilled prime rib with black olive tapenade—served in a rustic but elegant dining room in a faux-Tuscan complex with a verdigris cupola—caused a sensation. Its owners were Nancy Silverton and Mark Peel, chefs who had come up through the ranks of LA dining and not from New York, France, or Austria.

I've eaten at Campanile too many times to count, and every time I do, I feel grounded in this city. Los Angeles is a hard place to know—its fantasyland roots, its ethnic patchwork, and its almost too perfect sense of glamour all defy easy explanation. But sitting in a crowded dining room like Campanile's, I feel the disparate streams of LA's history coming together, and I can gaze around me, and at the plates of beautiful food, and say to myself, This is it. This is LA.

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here, and Ava Gardner works behind the soda fountain before finding fame. Schwab's closes in 1983.

1936 Chili goes on the menu at **Chasen's**, the Beverly Hills restaurant. The dish (facing page) is a hit. In 1963, Elizabeth Taylor has a shipment of Chasen's chili delivered to the set of her movie *Cleopatra*, in Rome.



1966 The country's first sushi bar opens, in the Little Tokyo restaurant **Kawafuku**.

Late 1960s Chef Ichiro Mashita invents the California roll (above) at the restaurant **Tokyo Kaikan**. The avocado in the roll is meant to evoke the creamy texture of more expensive tuna belly.

1982 California-cuisine pioneer Wolfgang Puck opens **Spago**, his first restaurant; his then wife, Barbara Lazaroff (pictured with Puck at right) designs the space.

1985 Mary Sue Milliken and Susan Feniger open the influential **Border Grill** in Hollywood; they find wider



fame in 1995 on the Food Network show *Two Hot Tamales*.

2006 Celebrity chef Mario Batali makes his Los Angeles debut in conjunction with the pastry chef and restaurateur Nancy Silverton, with Hollywood's **Pizzeria Mozza**; its sister restaurant, Osteria Mozza, opens next door the following year.


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CLASSIC

Salad City

Dining trends come and go, but the chopped salad endures

BY CAROLYNN CARREÑO

I GREW UP IN SOUTHERN California, where the salad-as-main-course is accepted as an article of faith, but it wasn't until I moved to Los Angeles that I truly grasped the phenomenon—native to this city and as ubiquitous as ever—that is the chopped salad. One lunchtime a few months ago, I sat in a red leather booth at the restaurant La Scala, a Beverly Hills institution since 1956, and watched as nearly every waiter emerged from the kitchen carrying the same thing: a pale green, perfectly domed mound that turned out to be the Jean Leon Original Chopped Salad. Named for the restaurant's original owner, it is believed—by some—to be the first salad of its kind.

At its most fundamental, a chopped salad is one in which the ingredients are cut down to a uniform size and tossed, either in the kitchen or at the table, so that every bite delivers all the flavors of the salad at once. According to Gigi Leon, the daughter of Jean and the current owner of La Scala, the chopped salad was born at the restaurant in the early 1960s, when customers decided that its Gourmet Salad—a mixture of iceberg lettuce leaves, salami, mozzarella, and marinated chickpeas—was too messy to eat and began requesting that it be chopped in the kitchen. Today the ingredients are tossed and placed on a cutting board, at which point a cook holding two large knives in one hand proceeds to chop them samurai style, reducing them within 30 seconds to a homogenous pile about a third its original size, which is then drizzled with a dressing of olive oil and red wine vinegar and topped with chickpeas. Before the diner has taken the first bite, the chef has probably chopped and plated several more orders: the restaurant serves some 400 a day, which means that eight out of ten customers order it.





Above, from left, the Cobb salad, invented in 1937 at Los Angeles's Brown Derby restaurant; the Chinese chicken salad, a Southern California classic topped with ribbons of crisp-fried wonton wrapper.

ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI (2)

Another contender for the "original chopped salad" title is the one invented in 1937 by Robert H. Cobb, the owner of LA's long-gone Brown Derby restaurant. It includes bacon, tomatoes, chicken, avocado, hard-cooked egg, chives, watercress, and romaine and iceberg lettuces, dressed with Roquefort cheese and red wine vinaigrette. Now featured on restaurant menus around the country, often under the name California Cobb, it still evokes the power lunches of old Hollywood. Jack Warner, a founder of the Warner Brothers studio, was known to send his chauffeur regularly to the Brown Derby to pick up Cobb salad by the carton. Though the Cobb predates La Scala's salad, there are those who maintain that the version originally served at the Brown Derby rested on a foundation of unchopped lettuce leaves, thereby disqualifying it as a chopped salad. Still, the Cobb as we know it today tends to be a thoroughly chopped affair. Others insist that the Cobb belongs in another category altogether, that of the composed salad, in which the various ingredients are arranged in an artful pattern on the plate. I'm inclined, however, to agree with Leslie Brenner, the former food editor of the *Los Angeles Times*, who pointed out in a 2005 article on the dearth of composed salads on LA menus, "You don't want to eat [a Cobb salad] until you toss it—at which point, it loses its composure."

If we're willing to allow the Cobb as a chopped salad, then there's at least one other that likely predates both that one and La Scala's. The Chinese chicken salad has been traced back, depending on the source, to different Cantonese or Sichuanese dishes but has, over the years, become associated above all with Southern California. These days such a salad typically consists of a mix of shredded vegetables including cabbage and carrots; shredded chicken; a dressing of soy sauce, sesame oil, and rice vinegar; and a topping of crunchy fried Chinese noodles.

Many of the earliest incarnations of the Chinese chicken salad, which had taken hold on California tables by the 1930s, bore little resemblance to today's versions, though. A recipe published in the *Los Angeles Times* in 1938 calls for boiled bean sprouts and French

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CAROLYNN CARREÑO *is the coauthor, with Kenny Shopsin, of* Eat Me: The Food and Philosophy of Kenny Shopsin *(Knopf, 2008).*


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dressing. A more familiar take from today's perspective, topped with fried wonton skins and toasted almonds, was served at Madame Wu's Garden, a popular celebrity hangout in Santa Monica from 1961 until it closed in 1998; the proprietor, Sylvia Wu, says it was created at the request of Cary Grant. Other stars favored the one at the Fox Studios Commissary, which began serving its own popular version, topped with daikon sprouts, sliced cucumber, and red onion as well as fried wontons, sometime in the 1970s. The Chinese chicken salad might be said to have reached its apotheosis, though, in the chef Wolfgang Puck's innovative version, which includes julienned snow peas and a brightly flavored Chinese mustard vinaigrette and was first served in 1983 at his Santa Monica restaurant Chinois on Main.

It's interesting that the La Scala, Cobb, and Chinese chicken salads, in their earliest versions anyway, all consisted of ingredients that might be found in a supermarket anywhere in the United States. It wasn't until the mid-1980s, when Puck introduced the Chino Chopped Vegetable Salad—a showcase for green beans, corn, artichoke hearts, and other produce from Chino Ranch, a farm north of San Diego with a cult following among California chefs—that the chopped salad in Los Angeles really began to reflect the abundant seasonal produce available right here in the city's many farmers' markets.

More chopped salad recipes at SAVEUR.COM/ISSUE127

Today the chopped salad is an emblem of LA's penchant for sourcing locally and thinking globally. Clementine, a market-driven café in Century City, has a Spanish chopped salad of romaine and radicchio, pimentón-marinated chickpeas, roasted red peppers, chorizo, and Mahón (a sharp cows' milk cheese) tossed with sherry vinaigrette. At Ciudad, downtown, owners Mary Sue Milliken and Susan Feniger offer a chopped salad featuring great big Cuzco corn kernels, plantain chips, calypso beans, and crumbled Cabrales (a Spanish blue cheese). One of my favorites, the chopped salad at Jar, a West Hollywood steak house, combines fresh cabbage, carrots, and fennel with olives, Italian prosciutto, and roast chicken. Like the salads at Clementine and Ciudad, it may have an eclectic pedigree, but it's anything but haphazard in design. Jar's owner, Suzanne Tracht, insists that a good chopped salad is a delicate balancing act of complementary flavors and textures. "You take out one ingredient," she says, "and it's just not the same. It all works together."

COBB SALAD

SERVES 4–6

Los Angeles's Brown Derby closed its doors long ago, but this classic salad (pictured on page 30), invented in 1937 by the restaurant's owner, Robert H. Cobb, lives on. We based this recipe on one we found in *The Los Angeles Times California Cookbook* (Plume, 1981).

FOR THE DRESSING:

- ¾ cup canola oil
- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- ¼ cup red wine vinegar
- 1 tbsp. fresh lemon juice
- ¾ tsp. dry mustard
- ½ tsp. Worcestershire
- ¼ tsp. sugar
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

FOR THE SALAD:

- ½ head iceberg lettuce, cored and shredded
- ½ head romaine lettuce, chopped
- ½ bunch watercress, some of the stems trimmed, chopped
- 2 oz. blue cheese, preferably Roquefort, crumbled
- 6 strips cooked bacon, roughly chopped
- 3 hard-boiled eggs, peeled and cut into ½" cubes
- 2 medium tomatoes, peeled, seeded, and cut into ½" cubes
- 1 boneless skinless chicken breast, cooked and cut into ½" cubes
- 1 avocado, peeled, pitted, and cut into ½" cubes
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 2 tbsp. minced chives

❶ Make the dressing: Combine the canola oil, olive oil, vinegar, lemon juice, mustard, Worcestershire, sugar, and garlic in a blender. Purée the ingredients to make a smooth dressing and season with salt and pepper. Set the dressing aside (or refrigerate, covered, for up to 1 week).

❷ Make the salad: On a large platter, combine the iceberg and romaine lettuces along with the watercress. Arrange the blue cheese, bacon, eggs, tomatoes, chicken, and avocado on top of the greens in neat rows. To serve, drizzle salad with dressing, season with salt and pepper, and top with chives. Alternatively, toss everything together in a bowl.

CHINESE CHICKEN SALAD

SERVES 4–6

Variations on this salad (pictured on page 30) have been served everywhere from the Fox Studios Commissary to Wolfgang Puck's Chinois on Main.

FOR THE DRESSING:

- ½ cup canola oil
- ¼ cup rice vinegar
- 3 tbsp. soy sauce
- 3 tbsp. smooth peanut butter
- 1½ tbsp. Asian sesame oil
- 1 tbsp. fresh lime juice
- 1 tbsp. dry mustard
- ½ tbsp. honey
- ½ tbsp. toasted sesame seeds
- ½ tsp. minced ginger
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

FOR THE SALAD:

- Canola oil, for frying
- 5 wonton wrappers, cut into ¼" strips
- ½ head Napa cabbage, cored and shredded
- ½ head romaine lettuce, shredded
- 1½ lbs. bone-in skin-on chicken breasts, roasted and shredded
- ½ cup loosely packed cilantro leaves
- 3 oz. mung bean sprouts
- 10 snow peas, julienned
- 4 scallions, thinly sliced
- 1 red bell pepper, cored, seeded, and julienned
- 1 carrot, peeled and julienned
- 1 cucumber, peeled, seeded, and thinly sliced
- 1 Thai chile, thinly sliced, for garnish
- Black sesame seeds, for garnish
- Roasted crushed peanuts, for garnish

❶ Make the dressing: Whisk together oil, vinegar, soy sauce, peanut butter, sesame oil, lime, mustard, honey, sesame seeds, ginger, and garlic in a bowl. Season with salt and pepper; set dressing aside.

❷ Make the salad: Pour enough canola oil into a 1-qt. saucepan that it reaches a depth of 2"; heat over medium-high heat until a thermometer reads 350°. Add wontons; cook until crisp, 20–30 seconds. Using tongs, transfer strips to paper towels; set aside.

❸ Combine cabbage, lettuce, chicken, and cilantro in a bowl; divide between plates. Arrange sprouts, peas, scallions, peppers, carrots, and cucumbers over each salad; drizzle with dressing. Garnish with chiles, sesame seeds, peanuts, and wonton strips. Alternatively, toss everything together in a bowl.

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Heat and Sweet

Two versatile LA condiments

BY BETSY ANDREWS

DESPITE ITS FAST-PACED CAR culture and ever changing fashions, one thing I love about Los Angeles is its continuity. That's expressed in eateries like Philippe the Original, a Downtown restaurant that has been serving French dip sandwiches since 1918, and glitzy haunts like Pacific Dining Car, which has been plating prime rib for 89 years. At these old favorites, even the condiments have withstood the test of time.

Philippe's makes its own hot mustard the same way founder Philippe "Frenchy" Mathieu did when the current family of owners bought the place from him in 1927. Concocted four times a week by Elias Barajas, the same cook who's done it for nearly 30 years using freshly ground mustard seed, garlic, vinegar, and spices, it adds dynamite bite to the restaurant's jus-dipped beef sandwich or its lamb sandwich with blue cheese.

But this bracing condiment's usefulness stretches beyond sandwiches. "I have a friend who mixes it with Guinness stout for a sauce for his hot wings," says manager Julia Tauscher. "And I add it to my champagne vinaigrette to give it heat." It's terrific slathered on all kinds of sausages and hard cheeses, but I myself also use it to punch up deviled ham and deviled eggs, or even to brighten a chicken salad. I've whisked it into gravy; mixed it with herbs to make a savory crust for lamb; and combined it with soy sauce and rice vinegar in an Asian-style marinade for salmon. Preservative-free and fresher than just about any other mustard you can buy, it loses its potency after a few weeks, so you'll want to use it up quickly.

The mustard's near-opposite, the sweet steak relish from Pacific Dining Car is just as versatile. "People tell me, 'Don't bring butter for the bread; just the relish,'" says Nicholas Lerner, general manager of the 24-hour restaurant housed in a vintage train car. "I've even seen people eat it on eggs." Though it's no longer made on the premises, the tomato-based relish, studded with diced celery and peppers, sweetened with brown sugar, and spiced with cloves, is as tangy as when Grace "Lovey" Idol, great-grandmother of the current owner, first mixed a batch in the 1920s. Few things taste better on an aged filet; on a burger, it trumps ketchup. I use it to jazz up meat loaf and Swiss steak, too, and add some to my pot roast as it cooks. I've also spooned the relish into my bloody marys, where its sweetness balances the drink's spiciness. And, as with Philippe's mustard, every time I taste it, I'm reminded of the generations of restaurateurs who have made LA such a fine town to eat in. The mustard costs $4.75; visit www.philippes.com or call 213/628-3781. The steak relish costs $5.50; call 213/483-6000.

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No city on Earth has more-diverse appetites, and more ways to satisfy them; with its hundreds of ethnicities, natural bounty, and inventive cooks, this is a food lover's promised land

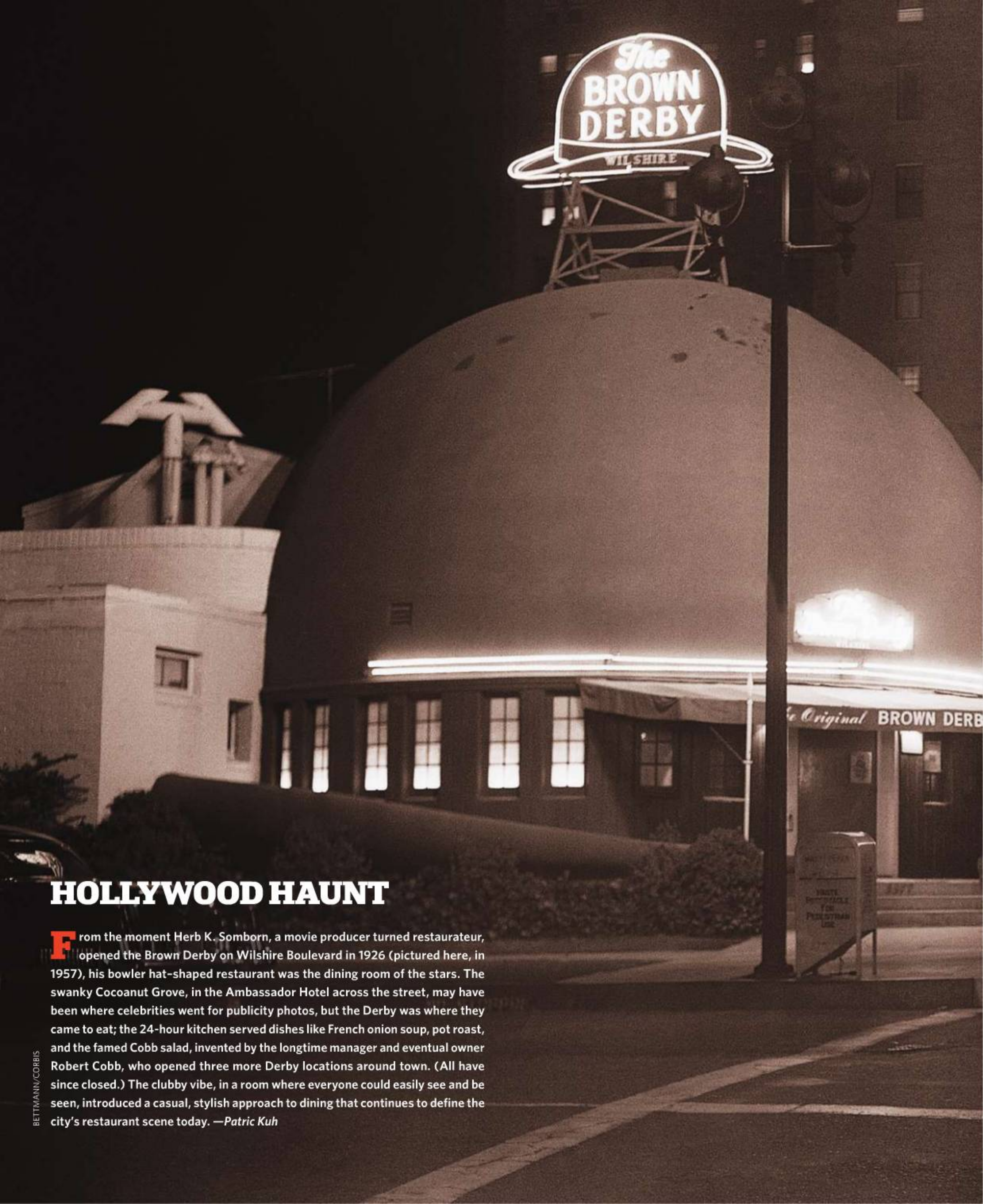
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geles

PENNY DE LOS SANTOS

Two men eating tacos outside the A Que Tacos truck in East LA.



HOLLYWOOD HAUNT

From the moment Herb K. Somborn, a movie producer turned restaurateur, opened the Brown Derby on Wilshire Boulevard in 1926 (pictured here, in 1957), his bowler hat-shaped restaurant was the dining room of the stars. The swanky Cocoanut Grove, in the Ambassador Hotel across the street, may have been where celebrities went for publicity photos, but the Derby was where they came to eat; the 24-hour kitchen served dishes like French onion soup, pot roast, and the famed Cobb salad, invented by the longtime manager and eventual owner Robert Cobb, who opened three more Derby locations around town. (All have since closed.) The clubby vibe, in a room where everyone could easily see and be seen, introduced a casual, stylish approach to dining that continues to define the city's restaurant scene today. —*Patric Kuh*

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Coffee Shop
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DINNER WITH FRIENDS

Meals at my friends Ruth Honegger and Marino Pascal's house, in LA's Glassell Park neighborhood, sum up for me what home cooking in this city is all about. On a recent fall evening, Ruth (who is Swiss) prepared *hortopita*, phyllo packages filled with Swiss chard and fennel (top right; see page 86 for a recipe) that she learned to make from her husband, Marino (who is Greek), along with a savory eggplant spread (near left, in bowl; see page 86 for a recipe) with tomatoes from their garden. Marino set out fresh Middle Eastern breads—paper-thin *lavash* (far left), cheese *boreks* (next to the *lavash*), and *lahmajun*, a flat bread topped with ground lamb (above)—that he'd picked up at a bakery in Glendale. There were marinated octopus (top center), Armenian *soujouk* sausage (bottom left), and slivers of fresh jicama (top left) from the local Super King supermarket, all of it drizzled with olive oil and Meyer lemon juice. It was a delicious, interesting mix, an expression of the cooks' heritage, cravings, and love for the foods of their city. —*James Oseland*

JAMES OSELAND

THE HUNGRY METROPOLIS

When I am showing visitors around Los Angeles, I like to take them for a sandwich at Langer's, an old-line Jewish delicatessen across the street from MacArthur Park that happens to serve the best hot pastrami in the world. By the time they walk the half block from the subway stop to the restaurant, they will have smelled food from four or five Central American countries, examined Mexican street murals, and been offered the opportunity to buy fresh mango, forged green cards, Salvadoran tamales, and cut-rate CDs of LA-style *cumbia* music. Within Langer's itself, they will probably wait for a table with customers speaking Spanish, Korean, and one or two regional Mexican dialects. Hot pastrami is a universal language.

Or maybe it's a cool spring evening, clouds skittering across the darkening sky, and we bomb across the east side looking for an itinerant vendor known for her mastery of the *chalupa*, the deep-fried-masa snack from central Mexico. Or perhaps we huddle around the outdoor fire pit at Street, Susan Feniger's new street food–themed restaurant in Hollywood, contemplating the potato-filled pastry *pani puri*. Or we buzz through a bowl of *ash-e jow*, a comforting vegetable soup, at the Iranian sandwich shop Attari; or try the consommé with beef-marrow dumplings under the olive tree at Spago; or sip Malibu-grown pinot noir amid the Frank Stella and Robert Graham sculptures on the patio at Michael's.

Manhattan may boast the highest concentration of high-end restaurants in the world, and Singapore hawker centers may pack more joy into each square inch, but Los Angeles is the best place in the world to eat at the moment, a frieze of fine dining overlaying a huge patchwork of immigrant communities big enough and self-sustaining enough to produce exactly the food that they want to eat. The famous insularity of Angelenos, our attraction to the pleasures available in our own backyards, may be bad for the civic culture, but the anti–melting pot is excellent for cuisine.

The Japanese phone books published here dwarf the ones you get from the telephone company; the Korean supermarkets are vaster than the American ones; and there are more Mexicans in LA County than there are in Guadalajara. When somebody asks if you feel like going out for Chinese food, the only sensible response is "What kind?" The Chinese community in the San Gabriel Valley, which stretches for almost 20 miles, supports restaurants from every corner of China, including districts you'd be hard-pressed to find on a map. When Mr. Chen goes out for a bowl of noodles on a Wednesday afternoon, he gets a bowl of noodles that replicates to the extent possible the dish that he used to get in the northern province of Shaanxi, not noodles that have been altered for the carriage trade. Mr. Chen gets his taste of home. We get the pure taste of Shaanxi. Everybody wins.

It should be noted that Los Angeles has its own, indigenous cuisine, too. The city and the surrounding area gave birth to the Cobb salad and the chiffon cake; the chili burger and the California roll; Taco Bell and McDonald's. What most people think of as Los Angeles cuisine is a variant of gracious, basic cooking: Dad grilling steaks and burgers out on the deck, Mom tossing a big salad, a pot of beans on the stove. Compared with London or Barcelona, Los Angeles is a young city, but its food has always had its own style, informed by the quality of the produce, the cultivated ease, and the pleasure of being able to barbecue outside in your shirtsleeves almost every day of the year. The vaqueros, the Mexican cowboys who settled this land more than 200 years ago, ate a lot of grilled meat and salad in California's early days, and so did the Midwesterners who ended up here at the beginning of the last century. The *Sunset* magazine, ranch house, checked-blouse paradigm of the 1950s was a continuation of that lifestyle—and so, in their way, are the grill-intensive menus of Wolfgang Puck's Spago, the big salads at places like

ILLUSTRATION: BRENDA WEAVER

CITY OF IMMIGRANTS: Approximately 1.5 million LA residents emigrated from Mexico, making them the most populous of the city's immigrant communities. The runners-up: El Salvador, the Philippines, and China.



the Beverly Hills Hotel's Polo Lounge, and the fire-charred pizzas at Nancy Silverton and Mario Batali's Mozza. When it is 72 degrees outside and the surf is up and Vin Scully is calling the Dodgers game on the radio, there is no patience for casseroles or stews.

What defines a Los Angeles restaurant? That may be harder to answer. You can find molecular-gastronomy spectacles, casually elegant hangouts with pitch-perfect Mediterranean food, old-school chop houses, fancy burger joints, secret restaurants run out of borrowed kitchens by ambitious line cooks, and places that are so beholden to the whims of the farmers' market that they are barely able to get a sandwich to the table. Food is political here in a way that rock and roll hasn't been for years; it plugs into the rhythms of the city and the world, engaging all the important questions of social justice and health, diversity and inclusion.

Chefs here are inspired by the food around them and assume that their customers understand what they are alluding to when they serve riffs on Peruvian *tiradito* (a cousin of ceviche) or toast spread with Malaysian *kaya* (a sweet, thick coconut jam). Culinary traditions bounce off one another in fascinating ways: the Good Girl Dinette in Highland Park serves a perfect biscuit-topped chicken pot pie, except that the chicken component is a Vietnamese curry; ramen stands are as popular in Chinese neighborhoods as they are in the Japanese enclaves of the South Bay; and Koreatown is lined with places to get *pho*, the Vietnamese beef noodle soup.

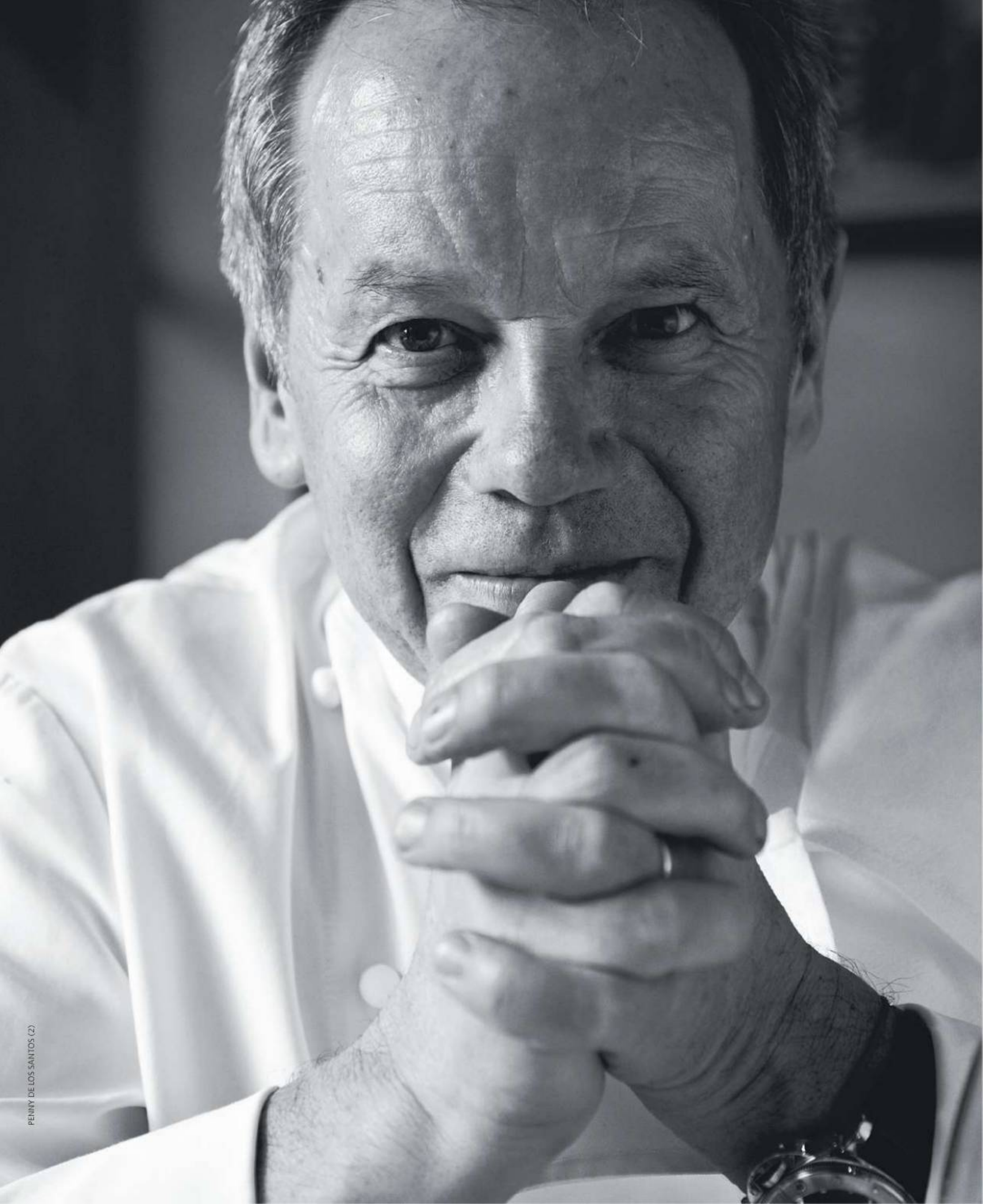
And that other Los Angeles? That alternate universe of bed-headed young actors in muscle shirts, where everyone you meet has a role in a basic-cable series and Ashton Kutcher is the most successful restaurateur in town? It eats pretty well, too. Say what you will about Hollywood, but never has there been a more supportive crowd of diners. And, back in the day, there was an undeniable thrill to spotting Jimmy Stewart at Chasen's, the legendary Beverly Hills supper club that closed in 1995, or Orson Welles at Ma Maison on Melrose. ("My doctor told me to stop having intimate dinners for four. Unless there are three other people," Welles once said.) It's not surprising to me that almost every current that has informed American dining in the past 30 years, including Asian fusion, high-end comfort food, the sushi-driven bistro, modern Southwest cuisine, slow-rise bread, and the cult of the celebrity chef, began in LA kitchens.

But while it's easy enough to have a great meal at popular Hollywood places like Sona and Providence, Los Angeles rewards the peripatetic spirit. When I was a young restaurant critic in the 1980s, specializing in what was then known as the "ethnic" beat, it occurred to me that week after week I was uncovering not just new dishes but whole new cuisines while the senior critic was busy eating at a lot of second-rate Italian restaurants. After a while, I learned that I was just as likely to find bliss on a folding table in a dicey parking lot as I was in a Michelin-starred restaurant. And while I might not be able to stop a guy in the street and talk with him in his native tongue about Khmer lounge singers or Mexican *fútbol*, I can sit down in restaurants, eat well, and absorb as much of the city's diverse cultures as I care to take away.

IN LOS ANGELES, FOOD BLISS IS AS EASY TO FIND AT A STREET CART AS IT IS AT A MICHELIN-STARRED RESTAURANT

Los Angeles, as urban planners are fond of telling us, is a constellation of a hundred languages and a thousand micro-ethnicities, a complex, *Blade Runner*–esque metropolis. Does such a postmodern city provide the road map for the future of American food? As a hungry native Angeleno, I can say, We should only be so lucky. —*Jonathan Gold, food critic for* LA Weekly *and author of* Counter Intelligence: Where to Eat in the Real Los Angeles *(LA Weekly Books, 2000)*

LAND OF PLENTY: In 1900, 34 percent of LA County was farmland; 50 years later, the county was still raising more produce than any other in the States. Today, LA is home to just a few hundred farms, which account for 4 percent of the acreage.



PENNY DE LOS SANTOS (2)

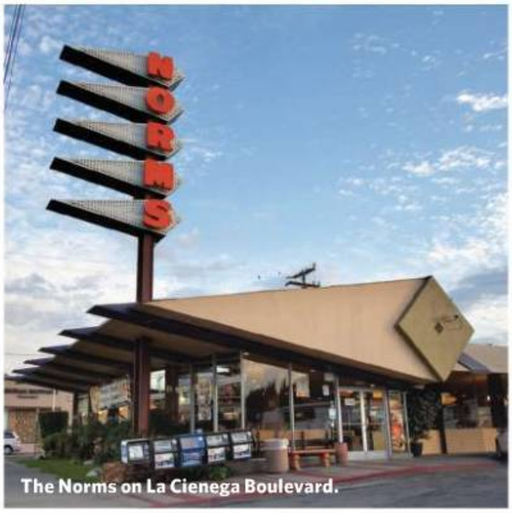


THE KING OF LA

Sure, he was the first superstar of the American food revolution that took off in the 1980s; yes, he defined California cuisine and then exported it to the rest of the country. But Wolfgang Puck isn't content to rest on his laurels. Not long ago, at his Santa Monica restaurant Chinois on Main—which pioneered Asian fusion cooking when it opened, in 1983—the Austrian-born chef took a bite of the roasted Cantonese duck and frowned. Could it be better? He decided that instead of cooking the duck for 80 minutes before service and 20 minutes when an order comes in, the kitchen should do more of the cooking *à la minute*. The result: an even more delicious duck. "I'm not sentimental," Puck says. "I only look ahead." On the immediate horizon are major restaurant openings in Singapore, Las Vegas, and Los Angeles, more midrange Wolfgang Puck Bistro outlets, and more Wolfgang Puck Express locations in airports and malls around the country. And then there are all the catering deals, the cookware line, the grocery products, and the TV appearances. Still, Puck is at his most impressive when he's delivering inspired takes on familiar flavor combinations, as in his signature pizza topped with smoked salmon and caviar or the beet and goat cheese napoleons (above; see page 86 for a recipe) at Spago, the restaurant that started it all. Behind the brand, he remains, first and foremost, a chef. "If a Spago customer gets a bad pizza at the airport," Puck says, "I'll hear about it." *—Laurie Ochoa, cofounder of* Slake*, a quarterly journal about Los Angeles*

COFFEE AND EVERYTHING ELSE

Beyond the easy parking and comfortable booths, the best thing about old-school LA coffee shops is that you're never late for breakfast or dinner, because both meals are served all day. They have space-age architecture, friendly waitresses, and kitchens that make everything from liver and onions to omelettes and hash browns 24 hours a day. Some of the legendary '50s- and '60s-era coffee shops, like Ships, are gone, but a few, like the 17 locations of Norms, are still thriving. My husband and I used to eat at the Norms in Van Nuys a couple of times a month in the early 1990s. We'd just had our first child, and we were living paycheck to paycheck. Norms was inexpensive and baby-friendly, and the food was good and plentiful. My favorite thing about the place was that the meals were served in courses, as though we were at some fine restaurant. First, the waitress would bring the vegetable soup, then the tossed salad with ranch dressing, then the pork chops with mashed potatoes and gravy. For dessert, there was pudding topped with a dab of whipped cream. Things were simply done a certain way there. One day, I asked the waitress to skip the soup, but she returned with a bowl of it anyhow. I reminded her that I hadn't ordered soup and gently pushed the bowl toward her. She just pushed it back with a smile and said, "You can have it!" *—Julie Kornack, a Los Angeles–based writer*



The Norms on La Cienega Boulevard.


A jackfruit in Little Saigon.

A TASTE OF ASIA The jackfruit pictured above represents everything I love about Los Angeles and its environs. Last June, when I was visiting Little Saigon—a handful of towns south of LA that is home to a vast array of Southeast Asian stores and restaurants—a woman called out to me in Vietnamese as I passed by her produce shop, in a strip mall, "Sister! I have good jackfruit today!" She was holding a huge one in her arms; behind her were scores more, piled high in bins. After I'd paid, she offered to cut up the fruit, which I'd never seen fresh in this country. One taste of the pungent, sweet yellow flesh, and I was back in Vietnam. *—Andrea Nguyen, author of* Asian Dumplings *(Ten Speed Press, 2009)*

FROM LEFT: PENNY DE LOS SANTOS; LANDON NORDEMAN; PENNY DE LOS SANTOS





MIGHTY FINE PIE

Imagine having to book a table at a pizzeria a month in advance. Outrageous. But that's how it is at Pizzeria Mozza in Hollywood, the sister restaurant of Osteria Mozza, joint ventures of the chef Mario Batali, his partner Joe Bastianich, and the bread diva of LA, Nancy Silverton. Folks without reservations gratefully grab a counter seat, facing the pizza ovens, or wait with feigned patience for a place at the wine bar. Of course, Silverton's pizzas would be splendid—at Campanile and La Brea Bakery in the 1990s, she singlehandedly brought crusty, tangy artisan bread to Southern California—but I'd never imagined she'd achieve perfection like this. All pizza makers should apprentice here for the crust alone: it's so full of flavor that it hardly needs toppings. But the crust is just a part of an elegant whole. On the popular squash blossom, tomato, and *burrata* pie (pictured), fresh zucchini flowers are arrayed like a sunburst; their subtle, pumpkin-like taste complements the lush, fatty, melting *burrata* (see page 92 for a recipe). One pizza is never enough, especially if you're just visiting LA and worry you might get run over before your next Mozza moment. I also recommend the white pizza with bacon, Yukon Gold potatoes, and slivers of Bermuda onion, or the one with mushrooms, fontina, Taleggio, and thyme. Explore the rest of the menu too: the buttery garlic bread comes in thick slices cut from one of Silverton's country loaves. Another must is the *caprese* salad: more of that *burrata*, topped with wood oven–charred cherry tomatoes, tart and sweet. It would be easy to bypass dessert at this decadent moment, were it not for the ice cream pie. The version I had last summer was made with Meyer lemon gelato, candied lemon zest, and Greek yogurt ice cream. I'd brave the crowds for it again any day. —*Gael Greene, author of* Insatiable: Tales from a Life of Delicious Excess *(Grand Central Publishing, 2006)*





BURGER BREAK

The hamburger may be the quintessential LA meal (and the lunch of choice for the pictured hair and makeup artists, working at a fashion show for the Mexican designer known as Mitzy, held at the Millennium Biltmore Hotel). Greater Los Angeles is home to thousands of establishments with the word *burger* in their name: from regional chains like Fatburger and In-N-Out Burger to popular one-offs like Pie 'N Burger in Pasadena to mini-chains like the one-year-old Umami Burger, whose creatively topped sandwiches have quickly earned a loyal following. And that categorization fails to include dozens of other legendary joints: the Apple Pan, famed for its hickory burgers since 1947; Original Tommy's, a 64-year-old purveyor of chili burgers; Bob's Big Boy, one of the world's first burger franchises; and on and on. The hamburger may not have been invented in LA, but it was arguably perfected here, where a burgeoning postwar car culture created unprecedented demand for a tasty handheld meal. Today, old-school hamburger drive-ins—like the estimable Bill's in suburban Van Nuys, among many others—remain a fixture of LA's cityscape. You don't have to drive far in LA to realize you're in the burger capital of the world. *—David McAninch*

PENNY DE LOS SANTOS

BIG FLAVORS Let's just get right to it: Ganda, a restaurant in the heart of Hollywood's Thai Town, serves the most authentic Thai food in America. Why? Well, the steam table near the entrance is a clue. On any given day, chef-owner Sue Klinmalai prepares around two dozen perfectly executed Thai dishes, including *gai pa lo*, or stewed pork belly, and *nam prik gapi*, a chile paste that's hot enough to curl your hair. The à la carte menu also has on-point Thai classics, like *suup naw mai*, a bamboo shoot salad with fresh mint and shallots, but Klinmalai's varied and vibrant creations on the buffet are the stars of the show. On a recent visit to LA, I went to Ganda five days in a row for the *pla duk pad ped*, or crispy catfish. This central-Thai specialty—catfish dry-braised in galangal, Kaffir lime leaves, and an abundance of spices—is probably my favorite thing to eat in LA. —*James Oseland*



PENNY DE LOS SANTOS



FRESH OFF THE TRUCK

As a kid growing up with a parent in "the biz" (my dad worked for years as a director and screenwriter), I liked movie set food just fine, from the spaghetti, meat loaf, and baked chicken to the bowls of potato chips and Skittles. As I got older, though, I realized that, on most sets, the food really wasn't anything to write home about. Fortunately, the movie catering industry is in the midst of a revolution, as a handful of companies strives to make the meals served on set as good as the food the actors eat when they dine out. At the forefront is Off the Shelf Catering, which was started by the actor Dustin Hoffman and his personal chef, Yossi Faigenblat, in 2003. The company hires experienced chefs who turn out restaurant-worthy dishes like braised beef with chanterelles and crispy duck with udon noodles (above; see page 89 for a recipe), all prepared with local, sustainable ingredients. Hoffman, who made some of the chefs co-owners in 2006, is still involved in the company. "Over the years a lot of people have asked me to invest in things," Hoffman says. "None of them ever tasted this good." *—Georgia Freedman*

LANDON NORDEMAN

BRINGING IT ALL BACK HOME

I DON'T REMEMBER EXACTLY WHAT I ordered the first time I visited Lucques, the chef Suzanne Goin's debut restaurant. (It was, after all, over a decade ago.) I do recall rustic greens—*cavolo nero* or Swiss chard—glistening with olive oil. Bone-in short ribs, spoonably soft after braising for hours in veal stock, red wine, and port, may have been the accompanying entrée. If so—and one evening, at least, it was—then a scoop of mashed potatoes, lazy with butter, was on the plate, too, cut with horseradish cream. As for the dessert, I remember that as clearly as if I had just finished it: a petite white porcelain cup filled with a chocolate *pot de crème*, dark as espresso, denser and richer than it was sweet. I cracked through its thin lid of solid chocolate with a spoon that looked like something from a doll-size tea set, and I don't think I uttered a word until I'd scraped the insides of that cup raw.

Other LA restaurants were championing the farm-to-table credo of Alice Waters when Lucques opened. Other chefs were versed in classical technique, and the idea of California cuisine was well established. But at Lucques, Goin synthesized those concepts with an intensely personal aesthetic. She wasn't building towers or dropping dots of sauce around her plates; she was concentrating on food at once familiar and surprising, food so damn good it rendered you speechless.

Goin has never deviated from her signature balance of indulgence and restraint, highfalutin French and bold directness, and it extends to every aspect of the experience of dining at Lucques. The restaurant is set in a renovated West Hollywood carriage house with exposed wood beams, a big brick fireplace, and an ivy-strewn patio, all tied together with a subdued palette centered on the color of the green French olive for which Lucques is named. Goin's business partner, Caroline Styne, is often at the door to greet guests, and as a hostess leads you to your table, there is a sense that you are being welcomed into a dinner party in progress. "You always feel like you're at Suzanne's house," says the chef Nancy Silverton, who hired Goin at Campanile, one of LA's seminal market-driven restaurants, in the mid-'90s.

Goin, 43, grew up in LA, in a family that planned birthdays and vacations around good eating. "Instead of Disneyland or the theater," she says, "going to L'Ermitage for crème brûlée was the big occasion." Her culinary training began in high school, with a position as a pastry assistant at Hollywood's formidable Ma Maison. After studying history at Brown University, she worked her way up through the ranks of world-class kitchens, from Berkeley's Chez Panisse to the three-Michelin-starred L'Arpège, in Paris. While she draws notes from Mediterranean, Middle Eastern, Latin American, and Asian cuisines, Goin's dishes are at their core Southern Californian, inspired by ingredients grown here. Roast chicken slathered in fiery Moroccan harissa is served with a bright orange dollop of carrot purée and a scattering of dandelion greens (see page 90 for a recipe); a generous squeeze of lemon intensifies the tang of the buttermilk dressing on a winter salad of thinly sliced raw beets, tart apples, and walnuts (see page 86 for a recipe).

In the wake of Lucques's success, Goin and Styne have opened two more places, both reflecting remarkable prescience about the way people in this city want to eat. AOC, which was at the vanguard of LA's new wave of wine bars, offers small plates with big ideas: duck confit with shell beans and ham hocks, paddlefish caviar and warm corn pancakes. To create Tavern, Goin and Styne transformed a former burger joint into a trio of easygoing spaces: a bar-lounge; an airy dining room more informal than the one at Lucques but equally characterized by premium ingredients and bold flavors; and a take-out area and café. "There's just something about the way we live and eat in LA," Goin says. "We're casual. When Lucques opened, people would call it a fine-dining restaurant, and we'd think, Really? We try to give great service, but in a personal way. Now people get it."
—*Margot Dougherty, a freelance journalist in Los Angeles*

PENNY DE LOS SANTOS; ILLUSTRATION: BRENDA WEAVER

GREAT STUDIO COMMISSARY MOMENTS In 1924, MGM studio chief Louis B. Mayer puts his wife's matzo ball soup on the menu; in the 1940s, Warner Brothers commissary cooks keep hot dogs on hand for Bette Davis.





Suzanne Goin, chef and co-owner of Lucques, AOC, and Tavern.





From left, a fairgoer circa 1953 with a giant cucumber; Ronald and Nancy Reagan attend the fair in 1966.

EVERYONE LOVES A FAIR My late-1960s childhood in Los Angeles was a ranchy wonderland of orange groves, date orchards, horses, ponies, peacocks, and burros. Back then, it was a surprisingly bucolic place for a major metropolis. There aren't many vestiges of LA's rural heritage left, but I'm reminded of it each September when the LA County Fair starts back up in Pomona, 30 miles east of Downtown. Since 1922, it's been an end-of-summer rite for all Angelenos: an old-timey funfest with livestock shows, rides, cooking contests, 4-H produce competitions, and the kinds of sweet, salty, gooey foods you find only at fairs. Nowadays, the concessions are mostly deep-fried: deep-fried Twinkies, deep-fried avocados, deep-fried zucchini-wrapped corn dogs (a k a "zucchini weenies"), and basically anything else you can skewer and submerge in hot oil. I partake, but I am thankful I can also still find a slice of homemade double-crusted apple pie that's worthy of a blue ribbon. —*Nicole Panter, a writer and faculty member at the California Institute of the Arts*

FROM LEFT: COURTESY LOS ANGELES COUNTY FAIR ASSOCIATION (2); PENNY DE LOS SANTOS





BEST BREAKFAST IN TOWN

I first stumbled on La Abeja, a little Mexican café on Figueroa Street in the east-side neighborhood of Highland Park, in 1986, when I was 23; my best friend, Joyce, lived in nearby Mount Washington, and we started making an almost religious ritual out of meeting there Saturday mornings to go over in penitential detail all the silly, alcohol-fueled things we'd done the night before. Boy, did those breakfasts hit the spot: huevos rancheros (pictured at left: over-easy eggs drenched in oniony tomato sauce; for a recipe see page 90) served with fluffy Mexican rice and some of the best refried beans in the world; big, hot bowls of *menudo* studded with tender tripe and hominy; and endless cups of soul-satisfying, diner-variety coffee. La Abeja (or The Bee) serves Mexican home-style cooking of the highest order; not surprising considering that the place started its life as a corner store in 1969 with a kitchen in the back where the owners, Jose and Gloria Fonseca, would prepare meals for their family. Eventually, customers started asking whether they could get take-out versions of some of those foods, many of them made from recipes the family had brought from their native Mexico City. Before long the Fonsecas cleared out the aisles and shelves and set up tables and chairs (they kept the candy counter up front). When I visited La Abeja recently, I hadn't been back in over a decade. Except for the fact that the Fonsecas had passed away and their son Roy was now working the dining room, very little had changed. Neighborhood kids were stopping in for a pack of Bubble Yum; sleepy-eyed art students and guys from the auto body shop down the street filled the tables; and the *platillo de huevos rancheros* that I ordered was still the most fortifying breakfast around. *—James Oseland*



THE REAL CHINATOWN

The best dim sum in LA isn't in the historic Chinatown, downtown. You can find it just 20 minutes east of there, in the San Gabriel Valley, which is home to the largest population of Chinese immigrants in the country. Here, every morning, families and groups of businessmen head to Elite Restaurant, an unassuming three-year-old eatery, for traditional Hong Kong–style dim sum. The scene at Elite is crowded and convivial as waiters rush steaming bowls of congee from the kitchen to tables already piled high with all manner of dumplings, from meaty pork *siu mai* to delicate shrimp *ha gau*, and *cheung fun*, steamed rice noodle sheets wrapped around seafood or seasoned ground beef. The cooks, who were all trained in Hong Kong, make each dish exactly as you would find it there. (See page 84 for a guide to Chinese food in the San Gabriel Valley.) —*Georgia Freedman*

ARIANA LINDQUIST


Sahn jook
(beef meatballs)
Bau
(baked
buns)
Cheung fun
(rice noodle
sheets)
Fung jau
(steamed chicken feet)
Diet Coke

BREAKFAST IN AMERICA

THE LITTLE FOOD STAND, operated from the back of a silver Toyota 4Runner, sits at the edge of the parking lot of my local Home Depot, directly beneath eight lanes of one of the busiest freeways in Los Angeles. The setting is shadowy and sooty, dominated by the massive concrete columns that hold up the freeway bed, some 75 feet above. Planted at the foot of one of the columns amid the industrial grays, the stand is a smudge of color: the orange coffee dispenser, the green banana leaves that cover the tamales, the white Styrofoam cups for serving cinnamon-spiked *café de olla*. During the morning rush, the stand has plenty of customers, most of them day laborers who have gathered in the parking lot by the dozens hoping for a few hours of work in painting or demolition, plumbing or electrical.

The stand is run by Lydia, a 33-year-old native of Escuintla, Guatemala, who prefers not to give her last name because she is an undocumented immigrant. She has raven hair and shiny black eyes. She wears skinny jeans and knock-off sneakers. She arrived in the States five years ago, spurred by the desire of a single mother to provide for her three children, two of whom remain in Guatemala.

Lydia pops the tailgate of her 4Runner at around six in the morning, six days a week. With the help of her 24-year-old sister, Mari, she sets up a small folding table alongside the rear bumper and puts out a plastic dispenser for the coffee and another for *atole de avena* (a thick, sweet drink made with oatmeal and cinnamon). The sisters tie plastic bags to the vehicle's bumper and hood—one for garbage, another for cash, yet another for to-go bags. The preparations are carried out quickly, without a word. Their work here will last for two and a half hours; at the end of it, Lydia will go on to her other job, cleaning houses.

Usually, a line of customers forms even before Lydia and Mari have finished setting up. The men call out their orders: *pan dulces* (pastries), chicken tamales, *milanesa* (breaded beefsteak), ham *tortas* (baguette-style sandwiches). Lydia's breakfast special is a plate of refried black beans, rice, two handmade tortillas, and *guisado* (stewed chicken, beef, or pork); it is a nourishing meal, substantial enough to bend the paper plate.

STREET-FOOD SCENES LIKE THIS one are ubiquitous across the vast horizontal expanse of Los Angeles. Taco trucks and tamale stands, hot dog carts and grills for roasting corn on the cob, vendors whacking at coconuts alongside freeway off-ramps: LA should now once and for all be able to dispel one of its most popular stereotypes, that of the car city sorely lacking in street life, the anti-Manhattan.

Some mobile vendors—like the trucks crisscrossing the city these days selling Kogi tacos, a Korean-Mexican fusion food—attract hipster buzz, their locations announced on Twitter and foodie websites. But Kogi trucks and their ilk represent only a tiny fraction of LA's street food, which owes its existence to the city's Latin American immigrants and their taste for home.

"I am here because of my need," Lydia told me when I visited her stand on a rainy, cold December morning; she used the Spanish word *necesidad*, a term much more common in Latin America than its English equivalent is here. "And I am here because of their need as well," she said, referring to the laborers. "We aren't here to make a huge profit." She said she never charges more than $2.50 for her breakfast special, which includes a hot drink. And if someone shows more *necesidad*, there is a sliding scale, a line of credit, or the quiet offering of a free meal.

Just a couple hundred yards up the street is a McDonald's. The laborers rarely eat there. "Here, one comes to eat exactly as one does back home," said a young man from Sololá, a provincial Guatemalan town. "A hamburger isn't

ILLUSTRATION: BRENDA WEAVER

LA FOOD FIRSTS The cheeseburger (invented at the Rite Spot in 1926), the Monte Cristo sandwich (Gordon's, 1941), the hot fudge sundae (C. C. Brown's in 1906), and the Shirley Temple cocktail (the Brown Derby, 1930s).



a meal for us. A *guisado* with handmade tortillas—that's a meal." The men come for the tastes of a life thousands of miles away, for foods cooked in a home kitchen every morning starting at three.

These are also the tastes of economy and thrift. Lydia chooses ingredients on the basis of the best deals she can get at the Big Saver supermarket. Take her tamales: while the traditional Guatemalan versions are famous for the number and variety of ingredients stuck into the banana leaf–wrapped masa—green olives, raisins, potatoes, peas, garbanzo beans—Lydia's are minimalist renditions: masa, chicken (dark meat only), and a few raisins. "I'd have to pay more for the other ingredients, which means I'd have to charge more," she said. The same goes for the tortillas, which she makes herself. Lydia's are thinner than the typical Central American ones, but they're delicious. So is everything else the sisters make. It's some of the best comfort food I've ever had.

"A HAMBURGER ISN'T A MEAL FOR US," SAYS ONE CUSTOMER. "A *GUISADO* WITH FRESH TORTILLAS, THAT'S A MEAL"

When I visited Lydia's stand later that month, the atmosphere in the parking lot was tense. The previous day there had been a scuffle between a few day laborers and some guards from the private security firm hired by the Home Depot, which generally tries to keep the workers inside a fenced-off hiring hall. As I was sipping my *atole*, one of the security guards strode purposefully toward Lydia's stand and informed her that she was trespassing. He gave her ten minutes to pack up.

Twenty minutes later, Lydia was still selling and the security guard was nowhere to be seen, but she knew she would have to move. For two years she had been working in this same dark corner of the parking lot, which was always empty except for the gleaming Silverados, beat-up old Rangers, and other pickup trucks that pulled in with crews of workers. The laborers represented a crucial part of Lydia's livelihood, so for her it was only a question of where she would set up her stand the following day. The easiest answer would be to move a few feet away, off Home Depot property and onto the public sidewalk. But there she would be much more visible to Los Angeles Police Department officers, who ticket unlicensed vendors. (Lydia had been ticketed three times already; a week before I met her she received a citation that would cost her $400.) Eventually she told me that she'd settled on a location about 100 yards away, on a slice of concrete just paces from the main entrance to the Home Depot, that was owned by another retailer, one whose manager was sympathetic to both her and the laborers.

On my most recent visit, Lydia and her sister were in their new spot, the 4Runner parked alongside the neighboring retailer, a store that sells granite countertops. Business at the stand was as brisk as ever; she and her sister were surrounded by about a dozen men who were eating and drinking, steam rising from their plates and cups in the morning chill. I gazed toward the Home Depot and did a double take. There, in Lydia's old spot, was a new stand, another splash of color against the gray concrete columns. That one, too, was tended to by two women. A few men huddled around them. I wondered how long the women would last there and where they'd move to next.

Lydia seemed content with her new location, but if her customers overflowed into the parking lot, the guards could always call the LAPD. If Lydia was worried about that outcome, she didn't say so. There would always be another spot to sell from. This was her job, she said, her *necesidad.*
—*Rubén Martínez, author of* The New Americans *(The New Press, 2004)*

PORT OF ENTRY 2,836,576 metric tons of food entered the United States through the Port of Los Angeles last year. The largest import: fruit. The best-represented exporting country: Chile.



ARIANA LINDQUIST



A Guatemalan street vendor named Lydia prepares a stewed pork and ham *torta* topped with *queso fresco*, refried black beans, onions, mayonnaise, ketchup, and salsa. (See "Breakfast in America," previous pages.)



El 7 Mares
FISH TACOS

Sandwiches
Complete Dinners

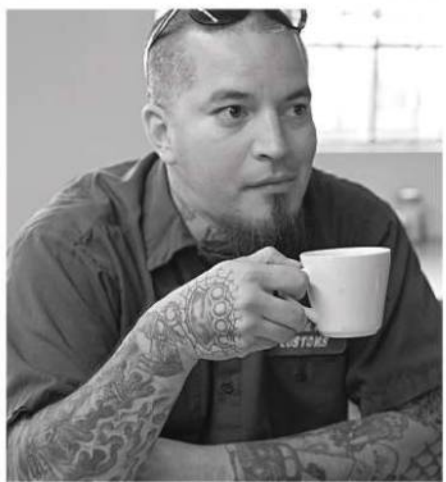





Chile California







VERY HOT.





























A LATIN AMERICAN FEAST Almost half of LA's population claims Hispanic or Latino ancestry, a fact that accounts for the city's amazing selection of Mexican and Central American foods. Top row, from left: a *clayuda*, a Oaxacan, tostada-like snack, at Guelaguetza, which has locations around the city; El 7 Mares La Playita, a popular taco joint in Silver Lake; a patron at El Tepeyac Cafe, a 55-year-old restaurant in Boyle Heights; *aguas frescas,* or fruit drinks, at Tamales Lilianas in East LA; *carnitas* at Downtown's Grand Central Market; a burrito and *cemita* (sandwich) truck in East LA; a Downtown mural. Second row: a chile relleno at Rivera, a restaurant in Downtown; a shrine in East LA; *cemita de barbacoa de borrego con quesillo* (spicy lamb and cheese sandwich) at Pal Cabrón, a sandwich shop in Huntington Park; grilling tortillas in East LA; a mural in downtown LA; lamb chops at Rivera; Bricia Lopez, co-owner of Pal Cabrón. Third row: a cook at Tamales Lilianas; moles at Guelaguetza; a street vendor in Downtown; *cocido de res* (beef and vegetable soup) at Ciros in Boyle Heights; beef enchiladas at El Tepayac; cooks at El Tepayac; fried jalapeños at La Abeja, a breakfast spot in Highland Park. Fourth row: fish tacos (see page 89 for a recipe) from El 7 Mares La Playita; a man playing the guitar in Boyle Heights; a patron at La Abeja; chiles at Grand Central Market; a street vendor preparing carne asada in MacArthur Park.

LANDON NORDEMAN (1); PENNY DE LOS SANTOS (22); LARRY NIGHSWANDER (2); ARIANA LINDQUIST (1)

FROM LOUISIANA TO LA

I GREW UP IN PASADENA in the 1970s, in a house my grandfather built. Saturday mornings for me and other African-American kids meant *Soul Train*, sponsored by Afro Sheen and Ultra Sheen cosmetics. My parents were the hippest parents I knew. Dad had a fluffy 'fro, and I remember him wearing a certain white one-piece jumpsuit with platform shoes and a man purse. My mother was, quite simply, gorgeous. She worked at the Santa Anita Park racetrack, where she was a hostess; her job was to look cute, dress up in white boots and a miniskirt, give tours, and hobnob with celebrities like Sammy Davis, Jr. She liked her job. Can you blame her?

My parents had a rocky marriage, but they were able to ride the wave of opportunity of the post–civil rights era, acquiring a home with a pool, a Mercedes, and scholarships to an all-girls school for my sister and me. My paternal grandfather Liney Hamilton, a k a Dobbie, had come to LA from New Orleans in the 1930s with my grandmother, whom we called Dear. They, along with large numbers of other New Orleans Creoles, came West to escape segregation and to find jobs, a migration sometimes called "from La. to LA." After a couple of years of renting, my grandfather settled in Pasadena on the northwest side, the black side, a stone's throw from the Rose Bowl stadium.

One of the things folks from Louisiana brought with them to Los Angeles was a love for seafood. Shrimp and oysters survived the journey; crawfish, not so much. There were also traditional Creole dishes like gumbo and red beans and rice, along with the Southern standards: collard greens, corn bread, sweet potato pie. And there was fried fish.

My great-grandmother on my mother's side, Minnie Mullen—we called her Mother Dear—was a fishing fanatic. She was in her late 60s, but she had a boyfriend, a man we knew only as Ollie. To the best of my knowledge, the entirety of their relationship consisted of fishing. Toting their aluminum beach chairs and a tackle box, she and Ollie would leave early in the morning in his dented pickup truck to head out to Lake Puddingstone in San Dimas, 30 miles east of LA. Lake Puddingstone was stocked with bluegill,



TODD COLEMAN



a small, flat sunfish with delicious, delicate-tasting white meat. I remember Ollie and Mother Dear returning with coolers filled with the day's catch, which they dumped in our driveway, ice and all. One or two fish would still be clinging to life, gasping, eyes glazed. It was the first time I'd seen something that would become food die. As soon as the fish arrived, Mom hit the phones, inviting folks to come over for a fish fry.

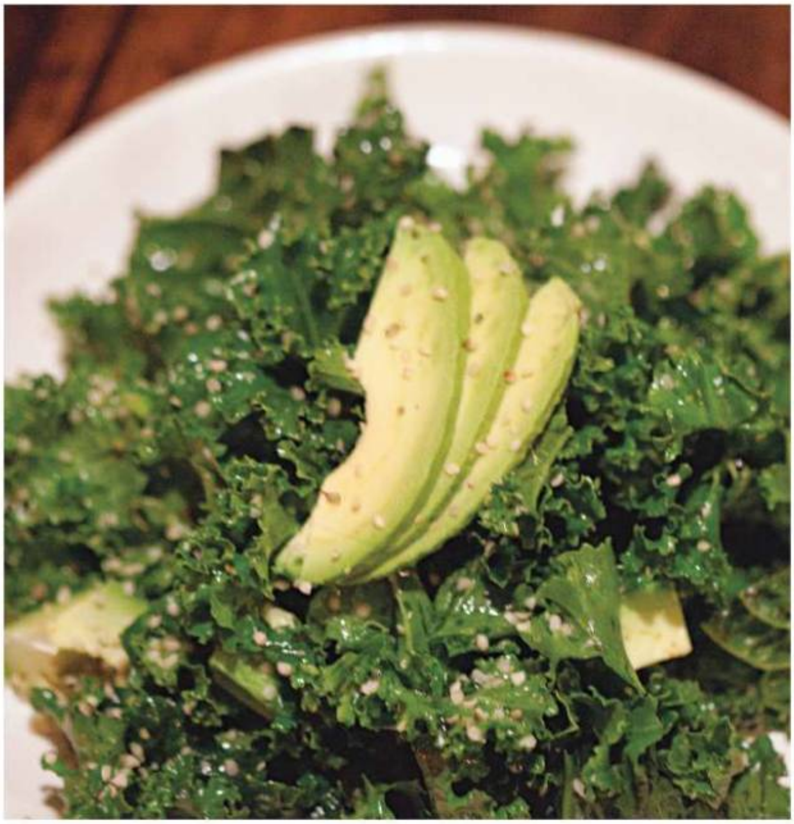
My mother wasn't one to do much cooking. It cramped her style. But when we were putting on a fish fry, she was all in and got the family assembly line prepared. I helped Dobbie clean the fish. We never cut off the heads; we just used a little knife to scale and gut the fish. My next job was to shake a few fish at a time in a paper bag containing cornmeal, flour, and Lawry's Seasoned Salt. Then I'd pass each fish by its tail to Mom, who dropped it in the oil, which was flavored with a big spoonful of bacon grease from the coffee can we kept on the stove. The grease added a smoky taste to the crust. Once the fish were crisp, they were plucked from the skillet and laid out on brown paper grocery bags to drain. Potatoes fried with onions and bell peppers were the side dish. Tartar sauce mixed with Tabasco added tang and spice.

Fish fries were casual, a mingling of family and close friends. There was my mom's friend Jimmie, a jockey at the track who had just bought his own horse; there was Vannie of the well-respected Valentines, who owned the local mortuary; there were the strivers, Carol and Ken Ellison, the first local black owners of a McDonald's franchise; and there was Daddy Howard, my mother's stepfather, who owned a prizefighting gym downtown.

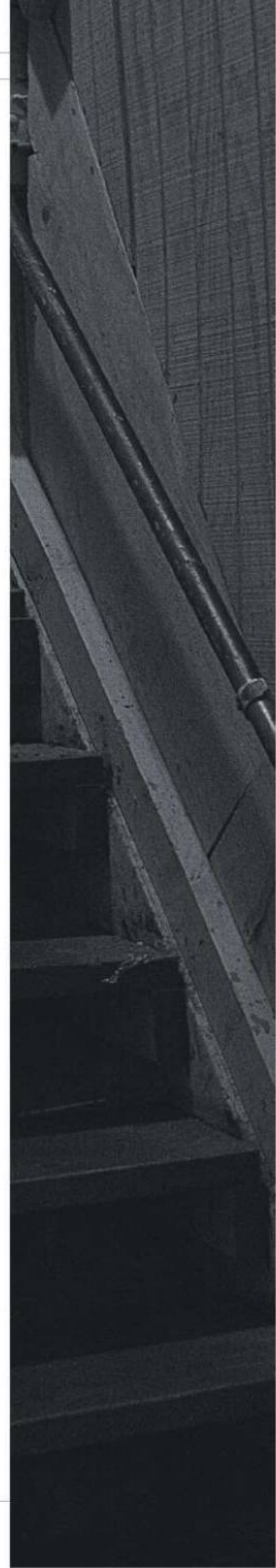
With the end of the '70s came the collapse of my parents' marriage, and after that our family didn't have the organizational wherewithal to pull off a fish fry. We also came to learn about things like saturated fats, and that can of bacon grease—a vestige from the South and poverty and the plantation—disappeared from the stovetop. But while it was there, it made that fish taste real good. (See page 89 for a recipe.) —*Lonnée Hamilton, a freelance writer and editor who lives in Los Angeles*

THE NEW GREEN

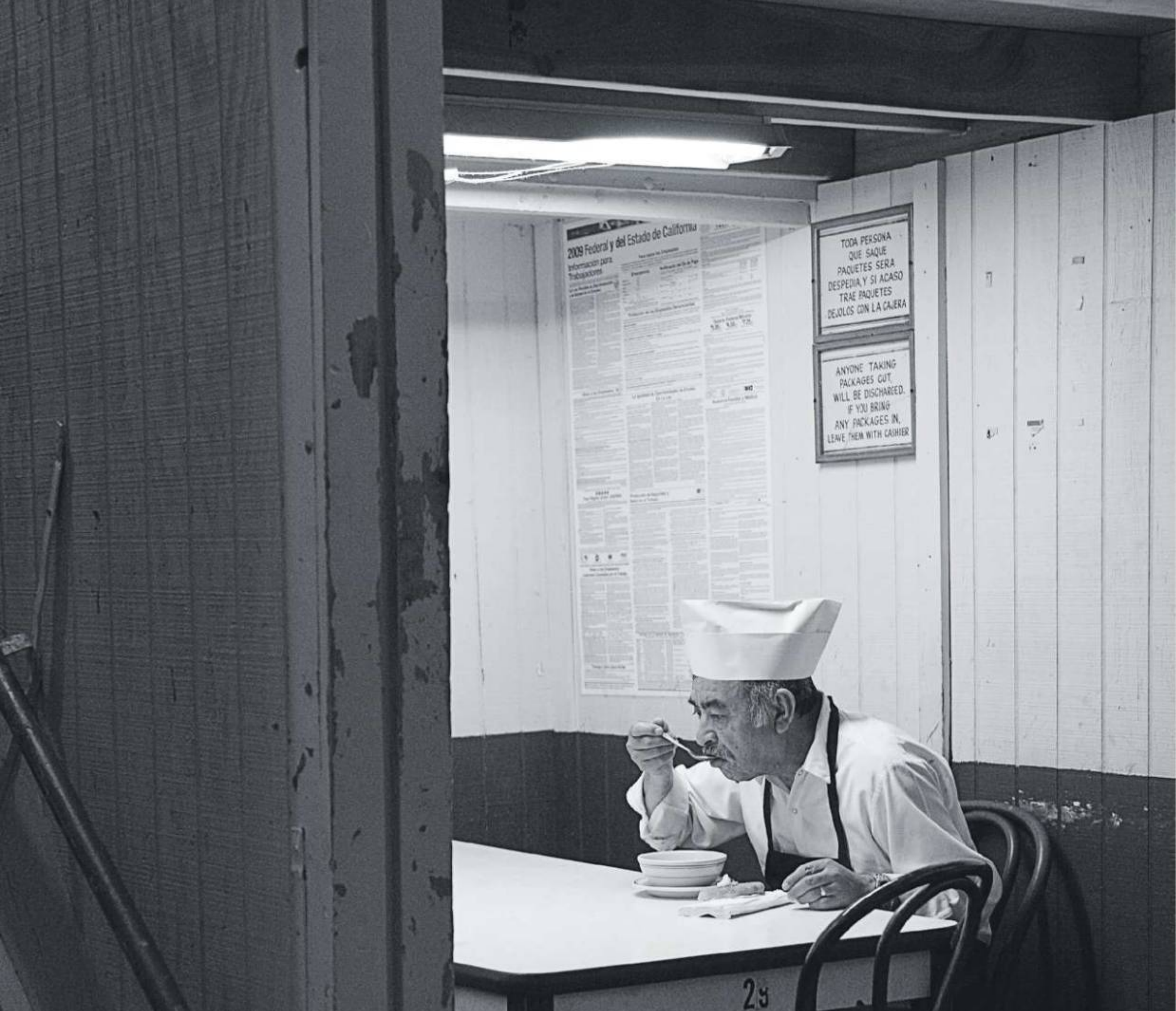
Sandwiched between a boarded-up movie theater and an American Apparel store in the east side neighborhood of Echo Park, Elf is a cozy, candlelit nook of a vegetarian restaurant with just seven tables. It's run by former members of the indie rock band Viva K out of a kitchen composed of a few steam warmers, an electric oven, and a sink. There's no tofu here, or any of the mock chicken or fake bacon you find at some vegetarian places. Instead, there are sweet-spiced tagines studded with olives and chickpeas; kale and avocado salads dressed with citrus (upper right; see page 86 for a recipe); and slow-cooked organic lentils and mushrooms served in thrift store ceramic crocks. Over the past century, various modes of meatless eating have caught on with health-conscious Angelenos—from the fruitarians of the 1940s to the counterculturists of the '60s to the raw foodists of today—many of them inspired by the fear of what food does *to* you rather than the pleasure of what it does *for* you. Elf's hearty dishes are rooted firmly in the latter philosophy and also in the culinary traditions of the eastern Mediterranean. "What I personally like to eat is vegetarian food that doesn't remotely try to emulate meat," says owner Scott Zwiezen, a prop stylist turned musician turned chef. On a recent evening, customers started gathering outside the restaurant at around 5:45, as Zwiezen added a garnish of roasted garlic to the tahini avocado hummus and Juvenal Rodriguez—a classically trained Venezuelan chef who wandered in one day and has never left—adjusted the seasoning in the couscous. Astara Calas (right) served. At the end of the evening, they split the pot of cash equally over a family meal of *chilaquiles* improvised from leftover crêpes. "It sounds corny," Zwiezen says, "but it feels a little like making music." *—Lesley Bargar Suter, dining editor for* Los Angeles *magazine*







FROM LEFT: ARIANA LINDQUIST (2); PENNY DE LOS SANTOS



NIGHTHAWKS AT THE CAFÉ

The sign at the entrance to the Original Pantry Café could have been written by Rod Serling: THROUGH A DOOR WHICH HAS NO KEY, YOU WILL ENTER A CAFÉ THAT HAS NEVER BEEN CLOSED SINCE 1924. And there is, I've always thought, a certain *Twilight Zone* quality to the downtown LA landmark. The man taking orders behind the Formica counter is dressed in a white shirt and black bow tie. Handwritten signs read CASH ONLY. The specials on the blackboard are barely legible, but never mind; they've been the same for years: country-fried steak, pork chops, spaghetti and meatballs, roast beef hash. A "pantry setup"—a stack of thick-cut sourdough bread and a saucer of coleslaw—comes with every one. Each order of hash browns has a one-to-three ratio of crunchy edges to fluffy interior. The New York strip is cooked to order. The peach cobbler à la mode is served at room temperature so that the ice cream won't melt too fast. At lunchtime the place is full of office workers, local politicians, UPS drivers, and anyone else who might want a satisfying meal with a minimum of fanfare. At three in the morning, it's a different scene: friends coming off a night of clubbing trade stories of their conquests; a girl casually snags my table's ketchup bottle, asking permission as she takes it; cooks on break (like the one above) retreat to a quiet table in the basement to refuel before the breakfast rush. As I wait to pay the cashier, secure in her glass booth, I glance back over the starkly lit room, the graying waiters, the regulars hunched over stacks of hotcakes. It's good to know there are things in this world you absolutely can rely on. *—Javier Cabral, a Los Angeles–based blogger (teenageglutster.blogspot.com)*

AT SEA IN THE VALLEY

THERE IS NOTHING WRONG WITH an exquisite meal whose muted complexities require your full attention. Then again, sometimes, instead of a finely tuned tasting instrument you're just a soul and a mouth and a stomach and—not to put too fine a point on it—a messy bucket full of tears. The death of a loved one will do this. First comes the sheer physiology of shock: the late-night phone call, the jagged announcement, the gasp, the 72 hours of crying. Death is a disjunction and a rupture, a falling through nothingness; then grief lands hard, with a thump in the heart, a constriction in the chest, and a metallic taste in the mouth. The taste is a reminder of the cosmic ionic soup from which we've come and to which we'll return, and, with our animal panic, the actual flavor of food changes. Comfort becomes paramount. Some of us may immediately need to rebegin smoking. But where to go, when death strikes, in Los Angeles?

The answer was clear in the winter of 1991, when my hard-playing, hard-drinking, motorcycle-riding musician friend Jim died too early, at 38. After an emotion-wracked memorial service, all of his friends—mostly studio musicians and their satellites—were gouged out, sad, hungry, and hankering for our neighborhood boîte, the Oyster House. Initially, the choice might seem counterintuitive: a theme bar boasting East Coast-y seafood in a freeway-locked, Jiffy Lube–packed area of the San Fernando Valley, the Oyster House is not only incongruous; it's defiantly cheerful. The O.H. never got the memo that it is two hours' drive in bad traffic to the nearest ocean, and if it had, it would not have cared. (For the record, its oysters are delivered every other day from a farm in Washington State.)

But here was the thing: the Oyster House has a feature rare for health-obsessed Los Angeles, a smoking patio. Abutting the parking lot, the patio is festooned with snarls of nets and seashells, along with its sign, which reads, THE CONCRETE BEACH. This surreal outdoor setting seemed the perfect place for a bunch of expats. You see, Los Angeles studio musicians are typically people of bad habits they've tried to leave behind in Chicago, Milwaukee, or Cleveland. (Jim, himself a fan of the O.H., had hailed from Kentucky.) But that day the masks fell. Not only did the cigarettes come out (how better to face the void than to hurl butts into it?), but some serious, non–Southern California–style drinking began: the spicy and excellent house bloody marys, bourbon rocks, vodka tonics, and even a few martinis (the simpatico O.H. bartenders and waitresses will provide not just extra olives but a separate glass full of them if you wish, literally a "side" of olives). "To Jim!" fellow bass players called out weepily. "He never knew how good he was, man. Never."

And then, to soak up the nicotine and the booze, the fressing began. The Oyster House has the sort of delectable, wonderfully ballsy food you can savor while smoking, not to mention drunk. One-dollar oyster shooters. Frogs' legs. "Blue-blue" salad (crumbled blue cheese *and* blue cheese dressing). I ordered my favorite, a mélange of shrimp, crab, and calamari served over pasta, drowning in tomato cream sauce, about a thousand calories a bite, not remotely kosher, totally allergenic.

In a convivial cloud of cigarette smoke, Los Angeles smog, and the keen snap of night air, reminiscences flowed about other Valley haunts come and gone: the Money Tree, Timmy Nolan's, the Steak Joynt. With neither a dry eye, nor a chardonnay, in the house, the O.H. was a fine place to lift a glass: "This one's for you, bro'!" Sure, we were at sea in the world and in life and in Los Angeles, and yet, for that night at least, we were firmly docked. *—Sandra Tsing Loh, author of* Mother on Fire *(Three Rivers Press, 2008)*

ARIANA LINDQUIST; ILLUSTRATION: BRENDA WEAVER

EARLY DIET CRAZE The "Hollywood Diet," or "18-Day Diet," appears in *Motion Picture* magazine in 1929; it calls for meals consisting of half a grapefruit, a small serving of protein, and a slice of Melba toast or tomato.





Sierra Fisk, a server at the Oyster House, in North Hollywood, taking a break during her shift.

SOUL FOOD

You don't have to drive far in Los Angeles to find *pupusas*, El Salvador's favorite comfort food: disks of corn masa filled with slightly salty *quesillo* cheese, black beans, shredded pork, the flower buds of *loroco* (a Central American herb), or any combination thereof. *Pupusas* are a food of the body. They arrive on your table perfectly griddled, with a pattern of toast marks as unique as the fingerprints from the person who rolled and filled and clapped them together. You could use a fork to eat them (my 95-year-old Salvadoran grandmother, bless her heart and her prim manners, always does). But that would preclude the joy of tearing off a chunk of the hot masa, using it to pinch up some spicy pickled cabbage (called *curtido*), and popping it in your mouth, savoring the cool snap of cabbage, the slight crunch of grilled masa, the molten ooze of cheese. Do not reach for a napkin. Lick your fingers instead.

Pupuserias are everywhere in Los Angeles because the city is tethered to El Salvador, Central America's most populous nation, by a transnational umbilical cord. The city's Salvadoran community stood in the shadow of the much larger Mexican presence for decades, until El Salvador's civil war of 1980 to 1992. That's when more than half a million refugees started new lives in neighborhoods like MacArthur Park and Hollywood and quickly spun off countless Little San Salvadors across the suburbs of the San Fernando and San Gabriel valleys. For Salvadorans, the comfort of *pupusas* (see page 92 for a recipe) comes not only from the sheer pleasures of the food. They are a taste of childhood, of rural El Salvador, of a homeland before it was torn by war. They are the flavor of the countryside that softens the blow of the city. When I eat them, I consume masa and memory, and I feel at home. —*Rubén Martínez*



PENNY DE LOS SANTOS

A stack of *pupusas* at Evitas Pupuseria in MacArthur Park.

A COMMUNITY GROWS Émigrés from Armenia, the largely Orthodox Christian nation in the Caucasus, have been an influential presence in the Los Angeles area since the late 1800s. But recent waves of immigration—spurred in part by the fall of the Soviet Union, in 1991, and by political upheaval in the region later on—have swelled Southern California's Armenian-born population, which is now the biggest in the world outside the former Eastern Bloc. In enclaves like Glendale, north of downtown LA, and Hollywood's Little Armenia, markets carry the full panoply of Armenia's cuisine: braids of mild string cheese; *basturma*, or spiced, air-cured beef; flat breads like *lavash* and leavened ones like sweet *matnakash*; salads of cracked wheat or lentils; shredded-phyllo pastries such as *kadaif*; and so on. What's more, Armenian foods like these have become staples for Angelenos of any background. —*Litty Mathew, founder of Modern Spirits, an artisanal-beverage company*



JENNIFER EMERLING

A cook at Urartu, an Armenian banquet hall in Glendale.

SERIOUS FUN

If I had studied only the food on the plate in front of me at José Andrés's restaurant The Bazaar, in Beverly Hills' SLS Hotel, the experience would have been curiously dislocating. Sure, much of it pointed to Spain, drawing on the modernist doctrines of El Bulli, Ferran Adrià's restaurant north of Barcelona, where chef Andrés trained. Here were foie gras lollipops. Here were liquid-center "olives" coated in a miraculous gel so that they burst in the mouth. Here were cocktails "cooked" in liquid nitrogen. But every self-respecting city from Tokyo to Dubai to London and back again now boasts a chef trying to sharpen the gastronomic cutting edge by playing with his food this way. Even a glance at The Bazaar's traditional tapas menu—with its *jamón* and *pimientos de padrón* and *croquetas*—did not necessarily root me in a particular place.

I had to look up, gawk shamelessly at the glittering, glass-encased, cushioned and tasseled, tchotchke-scattered madness of the various Philippe Starck–designed rooms to remind myself I was in LA. It may be a city filled with extraordinary eating opportunities, but, save for a few noble exceptions, conventional high-end dining has never truly thrived here. Angelenos are suspicious of formality and demand added value in equal measure. Andrés, who has already built a restaurant empire in Washington, D.C., on the strength of his gastronomic whiz-bangery, has clearly understood that.

So, the music pumps and the light settles in pools and the people arrive in their on-trend finery to sip cocktails in the bar and get sugar hits in the Alice in Wonderland of a pâtisserie, where clever chefs do extraordinary things with spun sugar and chocolate. And that's the key. If The Bazaar were just so much design and posturing, it wouldn't be worth the cost of the valet parking. But while the service may be laid-back and the vibe playful, the food is almost uniformly good, which is remarkable given that the place can serve 300 customers or more a night.

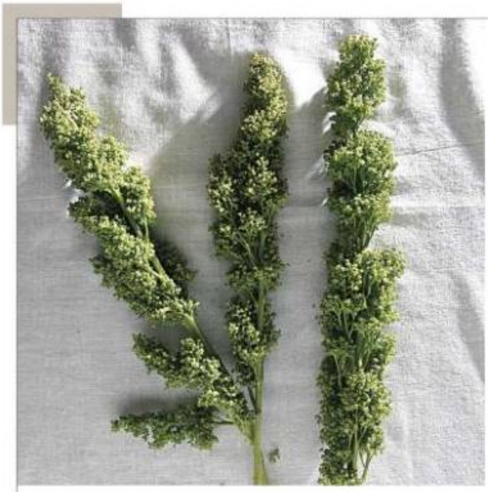
The suspicion with any restaurant experimenting on the wilder shores of new cookery is that, while the kitchen may be versed in modern techniques, it hasn't yet mastered the classical. At The Bazaar that qualm is dispelled with a taste of the offerings on that traditional tapas menu: the finely sliced *jamón* served just warm enough that the fat begins to melt the moment it touches the tongue, the crisp-fried *croquetas* of béchamel-coated chicken, the coarse Catalan sausages. Tapas may not be hard to come by outside of Spain these days, but a selection of tapas this well executed is. And it's easier to trust a reengineered tortilla—potato foam, slow-cooked egg, caramelized onions—from a kitchen that has first proved it knows how to do the fundamentals. Anybody who, like me, has spent too much time, money, and hope in the world's self-consciously avant-garde restaurants could not help finding The Bazaar refreshing. *—Jay Rayner, restaurant critic for* The Observer *in London and author of* The Man Who Ate the World: In Search of the Perfect Dinner *(Headline, 2008)*



ARIANA LINDQUIST



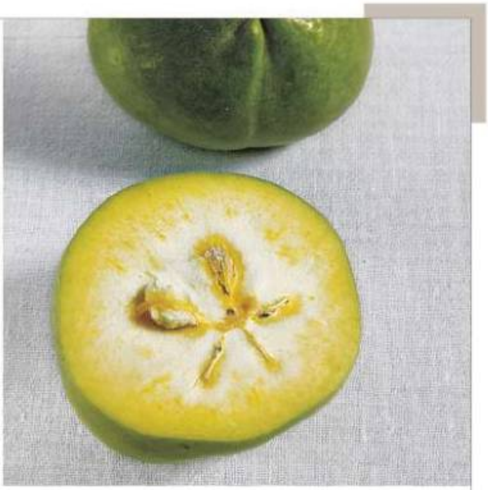
Douglas Rankin, a sous-chef at The Bazaar, in the SLS Hotel, plates fava beans, tsatsiki, and cucumber for an entrée of smoked Arctic char.



Huauzontle This central Mexican herb, with its sprigs of tiny, broccoli-like flowers, has a sweet flavor and may be added to scrambled eggs and sauces.



Hojas del Mora These leaves have a spinach-like taste. They can be steeped to make tea, used in moles and soups, or served sautéed.



Sapote The fruit of the sapote tree (an unripe one is shown above) has a custardy texture and pumpkin-like flavor. It can be eaten out of hand as a snack.



Tejocote This sweet, crab apple-size winter fruit becomes tender when cooked. *Tejocote* is the main ingredient in *ponche*, a Mexican hot punch.



Spiny Chayote This fruit (which comes in a smooth-skinned variety too) has a zucchini-like taste and is often used in soups.



Romeritos More subtle than rosemary, this herb lends a lemony tang to stews and moles. The edible stem has a milder taste than the leaves.



Nopales The mildly tart paddles of the prickly pear cactus have a slimy texture and, boiled and chopped, are popular in tacos, salads, and enchiladas.



Hojas de Aguacate The leaves of the avocado tree, often toasted and ground, lend an anise flavor to stewed black beans, tamales, and other dishes.



Hoja Santa This Mexican aromatic is often used whole, to wrap fish or meat for grilling. The leaves have a sweet, almost root beer-like aroma.

TODD COLEMAN (9); ILLUSTRATION: BRENDA WEAVER

A FARM TO TABLE REVOLUTION

IF YOU'RE NOT CAREFUL, a drive through southeast LA with the chefs Jaime Martin Del Campo and Ramiro Arvizu quickly becomes a botanical expedition, a survey of hidden sugarcane and cornstalks, of trees bearing *tejocotes*, or Mexican crab apples. "This guy has the best chayote," says Jaime, referring to the variety of squash, as he parks in front of a modest, Colonial-style house. "And avocado leaves, too." The two men, old friends from the Mexican state of Jalisco who opened the restaurant La Casita Mexicana 11 years ago in the town of Bell, just southeast of the city, are well known in these parts for their locally inspired cuisine. Their traditional chiles rellenos and moles are made with Mexican herbs and vegetables grown by local gardeners, and one of their signature drinks is an *agua fresca* made with tiny Mexican limes from a tree in Arvizu's mother's backyard. The two are easy to pick out in a crowd: with their bald heads, big mustaches, and perma-grins, they're a familiar morning talk show presence on the Spanish-language television station Univision, where their cooking segments on the program *Despierta America* spread the gospel of Mexican LA's homegrown foods.

Until the 1950s, Los Angeles was still the largest agricultural county in the United States, a prime source of citrus and walnuts, strawberries and tomatoes, milk and meat. When you drive around the vast metropolis now, you can see vestiges of the old farms: marooned barns in Pasadena that still house rusted tractors; orange trees, once part of endless groves, that march across suburban backyards. In industrial areas, hints of the old order sprout like grass through cracked sidewalks: lettuces in the shade of freeway overpasses and edible cacti, or nopales, on railroad right-of-ways.

After buying the chayote and avocado leaves, the chefs and I drive to the Stanford Avalon Community Garden, a rural expanse under hissing power lines in the Watts district of LA. Many of the farmers, who pay only for water and incidentals, are refugees from the South Central Garden, a few miles north, which was bulldozed by the city in 2006 and whose destruction was mourned by Angelenos. Zack de la Rocha of the band Rage Against the Machine played a protest concert on the site. The actress Daryl Hannah refused to come down from a walnut tree. Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa himself found the farmers this seven-acre site four years ago.

Facing page, Mexican and Central American produce found in community gardens across southeast Los Angeles.

If you're intent on a tour, look around for Juan Gamboa, a Jalisco native and the garden's manager, whom you can usually find working on his 41-by-30-foot plot. The men over there are from Guerrero, Gamboa explains; the ones to the left, from El Salvador. They all share tools and fertilizer, coffee and soup. All in all, there are about 190 plots, tended by a melting pot of farmers from Mexico and Central America. Martin Del Campo says he can tell where they come from by what they grow: if it's the musky-tasting herb *papalo*, they're likely from Puebla; if it's the broccoli-like green *huauzontle*, probably Mexico City. As we wander, people tell us which herb is good for a sour stomach, which repels gophers, and which flavors beans. *Chipilin*, a weed-like herb often used in El Salvador, has caught on among many of the farmers for its peculiar side effect.

"Viagra de Maya," an elderly Guatemalan woman says, pointing at the herb and laughing.

Today the chefs are looking for the best *romeritos*, a feathery, pungent green they use in their fried shrimp patties. Arvizu finds a patch he likes and nods to the farmer, who bends down to cut an armful with what looks like a rusted steak knife. Arvizu hands him a five. The dollar he gets back as change is worn and walnut brown with ground-in dirt. The experience makes shopping at a farmers' market seem as impersonal as a trip to the supermarket. —*Jonathan Gold*

RECIPE MILESTONE The first printed recipe for guacamole published in English in the United States appeared in 1931 in *Fashions in Food in Beverly Hills*, published by the Beverly Hills Woman's Club.



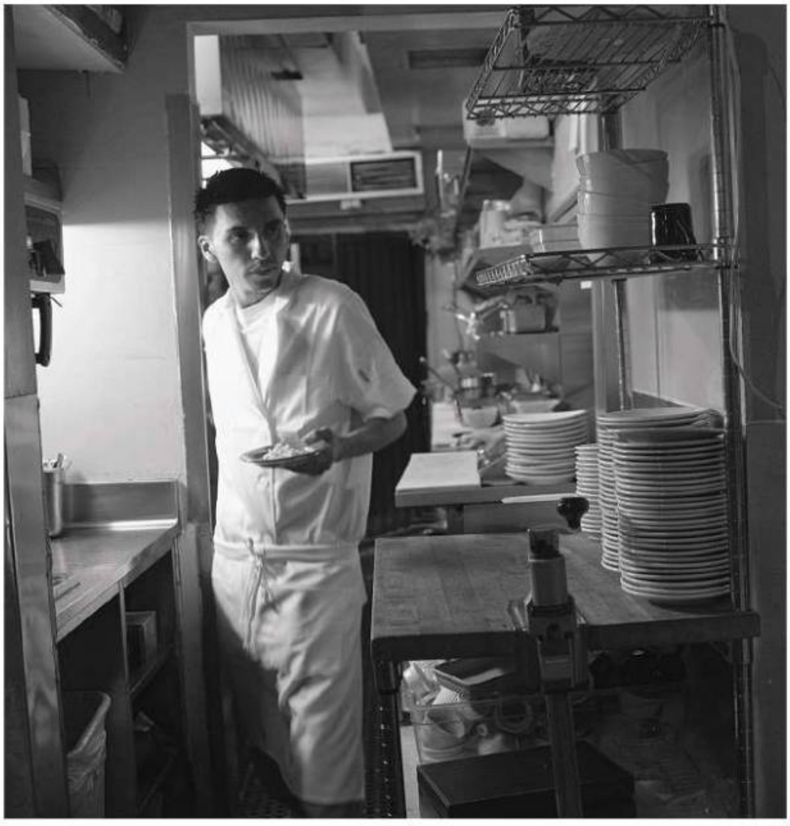
FAMILY STYLE

Want to get to know your community? Open a neighborhood restaurant, and be lucky enough to have it stick around for a couple of decades. My little place, Angeli Caffe, has been in business since 1984 on the wacky end of Melrose Avenue, the Hollywood street that was then just emerging as a shopping destination. The space was a former screen door shop, tucked in amid the neighborhood's thrift stores and New Wave record shops, that we turned into a restaurant with very little money and lots of goodwill. The design was edgy at the time, with a huge beam piercing the front wall and a rusted steel façade. The food was unpretentious, inexpensive, rustic Italian fare.

At the beginning we were hip, so hip, feeding a generation of partying boomers who were eating out every night. There was often a wait of two hours to get in. Over the decades I've watched my generation go from dancing fools to sleep-deprived new parents to mature stewards of a younger generation of tattooed hipsters, who know more about food than we ever did at their age. When I was growing up in LA in the 1960s, there was nowhere to get food like this; you couldn't even buy fresh basil at the supermarket. It wasn't until I traveled in Italy in my 20s that I discovered the simple goodness of spaghetti *aglio e olio* and lemony roast chicken (upper right; see page 92 for a recipe), dishes that most of us take for granted today. Angeli marked my way of bringing that food home.

Honest food and a welcoming vibe are a recipe for longevity in any town. But in LA, finding a place to be yourself without complicated demands—where you can have a bite and a laugh and go on well fed and refreshed—isn't easy. Angeli has come to be about more than the food and the architecture; we're a part of people's lives. It's an honor, really. *—Evan Kleiman, the host of the KCRW radio program* Good Food







CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI; LANDON NORDEMANN; ARIANA LINDQUIST



SUNRISE IN SURF CITY

On Tuesday and Thursday mornings at the Sugar Shack in Huntington Beach, 40 miles down the coast from LA, you're likely to find the Huntington Beach High School surfing team digging into post-practice breakfast burritos and French toast on the house. Since the days when her sons, Timmy and Ryan, were team captains, the restaurant's owner, Michele Turner, has "sponsored" young surfers, replenishing the calories they burn on the waves. The old-fashioned breakfast and lunch spot on the main drag of this self-styled Surf City takes its name from a 1963 song by Jimmy Gilmer and the Fireballs ("There's a crazy little shack beyond the tracks/And everybody calls it the Sugar Shack"). Its walls are covered in memories: pieces of boards, clippings from surfing magazines, competition medals, obituaries of local kids who died in the waves, portraits of others who have worked at the restaurant.

Turner feeds nonsurfers too, many of them regulars. "One guy, Mel, has come in twice a day since we opened, in 1967," she says. "He eats half a bowl of oatmeal with raisins on the side, then a chicken sandwich for lunch." But it's not just the homemade vegetable beef soup, Wednesday's turkey platters, or the popular Keppler's Special—a breakfast dish of scrambled eggs, bacon, tomato, avocado, and hollandaise on an English muffin (pictured at left; see page 90 for a recipe), named for the surfing photographer John Keppler—that lure folks to the Sugar Shack. It's the camaraderie. "You get filled up on food," says the surfing team coach, Andy Verdone, "and you get filled up on surfing gossip. Every surfer, from the world champion Kelly Slater to the little grom [young surfer] who's just starting out, has had a meal at the Shack."

Eric Ramsey was one of those groms when he started working here at the age of 15. Now, like the owner's sons—both professional surfers who don waiter's aprons at the restaurant when they're not chasing waves in Indonesia or Iceland—Ramsey, 21 and a pro himself, takes part of every year off to travel and surf. When he's home serving omelettes at the Sugar Shack, he always greets customers with the same question: "Any waves this morning?" —*Betsy Andrews*



PENNY DE LOS SANTOS

CITADEL OF TASTE

There is a certain kind of well-dressed woman who still wears nude stockings to lunch at the Polo Lounge in the Beverly Hills Hotel. Quilted Chanel handbags will never go out of style here. Neither will celebrity spotting. One recent morning—at that hour when the early-riser power brokers have left and the women with expensive highlights and faraway husbands have not yet begun picking at their Santa Monica farmers' market salads—Diddy, Mark Wahlberg, and the former Paramount CEO Sherry Lansing were just a few of the faces in the crowd. Nearly a century after its opening, the Beverly Hills Hotel remains the most reliable place to dine quietly among movie stars and moguls, without the frenzy of autograph hounds and paparazzi, in the hands of professionals like Felix Olmedo (pictured), a waiter at the Polo Lounge since 1995. My first visit, when I was a high-school kid sneaking off the path of a charity walkathon, led me and a friend into a palm-lined wonderland, where we found ourselves drawn down a curved, carpeted stairway and onto a pair of bar stools at the swooping counter of the Fountain Coffee Room. We pooled our allowance money and ordered a hot fudge sundae from a waitress in a starched pink-and-white uniform. Beside us were two women, one middle-aged, the other much older, with a distant stare and a familiar face. When the younger woman overheard that my friend and I were walking for charity, she exchanged a word with her companion and exclaimed, "Miss Hayworth is very impressed with you both!" Miss Hayworth, as in Rita. I can't imagine another place where running into a golden-age screen goddess would feel like the most natural thing in the world. *—Laurie Ochoa*



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AN EATER'S GUIDE TO LA

Now that you've worked up your appetite, here are a few eating itineraries and restaurant recommendations to give you a taste of Los Angeles's vast and varied culinary landscape. (Find more of our LA favorites at SAVEUR.COM/LAGUIDE.)



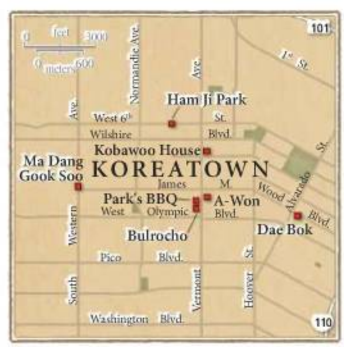
TACO NIRVANA With its motherland just three hours south, the taco is the ultimate LA street food. An exemplary version is served at **El Parian** (1528 West Pico Boulevard; 213/386-7361), a 40-year-old restaurant in the Pico Union neighborhood, where the beef for the carne asada taco ❶ is seasoned with salt and lime, charred, and then piled onto a handmade tortilla with onion, cilantro, and a red chile salsa. At **Los Cinco Puntos** (3300 East Cesar E. Chavez Avenue; 323/261-4084), an East LA standby that's been in the same family for 42 years, the *carnitas* tacos are filled with seasoned pork that's braised until tender and garnished with tart nopales (cactus). Want more pork? Try the *al pastor* tacos from **El Taurino** (1104 South Hoover; 213/738-9197); the meat is spiced lavishly with chiles and a citrusy adobo marinade before it's pit-roasted for several hours. And, while Angelenos will always love classic Mexican tacos, innovative cooks have looked elsewhere recently for inspiration. The **Nom Nom truck** (see www.nomnomtruck.com for location updates) serves tacos with Vietnamese flavors, like the lemongrass chicken topped with carrots, daikon, cucumber, and cilantro ❷. Another relatively new offering is the tofu taco ❸, grilled tofu flavored with chile oil, soy sauce, and garlic, from the **LA FuXion truck**, which specializes in Asian-Mexican fusion (see www.lafuxion.com for location updates). Among other meatless standouts is the potato *rajas* taco ❹ (roasted potatoes topped with pickled onions, chiles, and guacamole), from the **Border Grill truck** (see www.bordergrill.com for location updates), the latest venture from restaurateurs Mary Sue Milliken and Susan Feniger. —*Javier Cabral*

A KOREATOWN TOUR

LA's Koreatown, near Downtown, is a vibrant immigrant enclave: a rocking, all-night neighborhood of clubs and bars, of Korean driving ranges and Korean herbalists, karaoke rooms and supermarkets, movie theaters and bustling food courts (like the one in Koreatown Plaza, on South Western Avenue, below) that could have been



plucked straight out of Pusan. And then there are the magnificent restaurants, most of them specializing in a single dish or two. **Dae Bok** (2010 James M. Wood Boulevard; 213/386-6660) serves practically nothing but its signature pufferfish, sliced and tossed into a stew with vast quantities of chile and garlic. **Ham Ji Park** (3407 West Sixth Street; 213/365-8773) is a pork specialty restaurant known for its grilled pork ribs and a spicy stew of pork neck



FROM LEFT: TODD COLEMAN; LANDON NORDEMAN; MAP: THE M FACTORY

O'AHU
SEAFOOD CULTURE



Premium fresh fish is a longstanding tradition in Hawai'i, dating back to ancient days when Hawaiians tended well-stocked fish ponds to feed themselves. The expansive Pacific Ocean generously bestows its bounty on today's consumers of fresh fish, a wide and tasty variety from the depths, as well as shallow venues near shore.

Award-winning chefs like Hiroshi Fukui of Hiroshi Eurasian Tapas in Honolulu have their pick of 'ahi, swordfish, mahimahi, marlins, and more with which to be creative. But this talented chef has been known to catch fish himself to serve his discerning customers.

At least once a week, Fukui heads out from O'ahu's eastern shore in search of mahimahi and bottom fish like 'ōpakapaka, onaga, and ehu. "It depends on the time of year and what's biting," says Fukui. "I've liked fishing since I was a kid growing up in Japan."

Most of what Fukui catches goes to the Honolulu Fish Auction where fish are offered up for bid to O'ahu's fish merchants, distributors, and wholesalers. It's an enterprise in which quality is reflected in the price and fishermen are rewarded for their skills in handling their catch.

When the mahimahi are biting, Fukui reserves some for his restaurant. "It's my favorite fish to eat," he says. "It's not like the frozen variety that used to be served 30 years ago. Eaten raw as sashimi, cooked any way you like, really fresh mahimahi is really good."

To learn more about O'ahu, island resources, and to get started on planning your trip, go to

www.visit-oahu.com

Look for these fish when you visit the market or any of O'ahu's restaurants. All types are considered "Good Alternatives" or "Best Choices" by the Monterey Bay Seafood Watch®. It's always a good idea to ask your fishmonger or server and confirm your fish has been locally raised or caught off O'ahu's shores.

TYPE	NAME:	FEATURES:	TRY IT:
DEEP WATER, WILD-CAUGHT	Swordfish *Shutome, Broadbill*	Meaty texture; mild flavor	Grilled
	Monchong *Sickle pomfret*	Firm texture; mild, sweet flavor	Grilled or steamed
	Opah *Moonfish*	Rich, large-grained flesh; mild, sweet flavor	Broiled, sautéed, or steamed
BOTTOM FISH, WILD-CAUGHT	Onaga *Longtail Red Snapper*	Light pink flesh, firm texture; delicate flavor	Raw, sashimi-style
	Ehu *Red Snapper*		Grilled whole in banana leaf
	Hapu'upu'u *Grouper, Hawaiian Sea Bass*	Semi-firm, flaky texture; mild flavor	Skin-on and pan-seared
SUSTAINABLY FARM-RAISED	Moi *Threadfin*	Delicate white flesh; silky, rich flavor	Crisp-fried or steamed Chinese-style
	Kampachi *Amberjack*	Rich, buttery flavor; similar to hamachi	Raw or seared rare
	Black cod *Sablefish, Butterfish*	Velvety texture; buttery, rich flavor	Steamed, tastes great with miso
	Abalone	Very firm texture; mild flavor similar to clams	Raw (sushi or ceviche) or grilled
	Shrimp	Light color, firm texture; sweet flavor	Whole and crisp-fried

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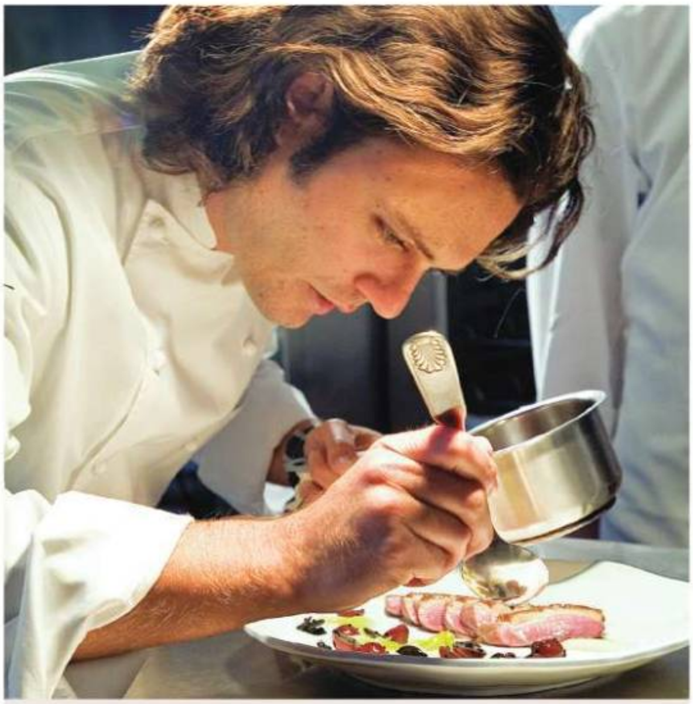
TAMASHIRO MARKET
802 N. King Street
Honolulu, HI

— TASTE —

HIROSHI EURASIAN TAPAS
500 Ala Moana Boulevard
Honolulu, HI
hiroshihawaii.com

KENNY'S
Kamehameha Shopping Center
1620 N. School Street
Honolulu, HI
kennysrestaurant.com

ROY'S RESTAURANT HAWAI'I KAI
6600 Kalanianaole Highway
East Honolulu, HI
roysrestaurant.com



A MAN OF THE WORLD One thing we love about dining in Los Angeles is how the city's best chefs boldly, often brilliantly, cull from a global repertoire. No one exemplifies that quality quite like David Myers (above), a 35-year-old Boston-born chef who rose up through the ranks of great kitchens around the world (Charlie Trotter's in Chicago, Daniel in New York, Les Crayères in Reims, France). When he opened **Sona** (401 North La Cienega Boulevard; 310/659-7708; www.sonarestaurant.com) in LA in 2002, he introduced an *omakase*-style chef's menu of small plates and channeled a Japanese reverence for purity and restraint into dishes like Arctic char with plump *bouchot* mussels under a light green curry emulsion and seared foie gras topped with cubes of frozen banana and a green-tea cracker. At **Comme Ça** (8479 Melrose Avenue; 323/782-1104; www.commecarestaurant.com), which he opened in 2007, he expands the notion of brasserie fare to include not only steak frites but beef Stroganoff with homemade egg noodles and one of the best burgers in town. His newest restaurant, **Pizzeria Ortica**, in nearby Costa Mesa (650 Anton Boulevard; 714/445-4900; www.pizzeriaortica.com), is worth the trip for the braised artichokes alone. —*Dana Bowen*

and potatoes. **Bulrocho** (955 South Vermont Avenue; 213/383-0080) is famous for its nourishing goat soup. **Kobawoo House** (698 South Vermont Avenue; 213/389-7300) has a larger menu, but everyone comes for the *bossam*, cabbage-wrapped steamed pork belly served with daikon kimchi, pickled jalapeños, and baby shrimp. In the mood for noodles? **Ma Dang Gook Soo** (869 South Western Avenue; 213/487-6008) is loved for its Korean knife-cut noodles in a savory anchovy broth. Korea has its own style of sashimi, thickly cut and served in large portions often accompanied by pungent fermented-bean sauces; try Korean sushi and *al bap*, a bowl of sushi rice topped with different kinds of roe, at **A-Won** (913½ South Vermont Avenue; 213/389-6764). And while two out of three restaurants in Koreatown claim to specialize in barbecue—LA-style Korean short ribs is a dish that has reverse-emigrated to Seoul—almost everybody agrees that the best in town is at **Park's BBQ** (955 South Vermont Avenue; 213/380-1717), where the beef is Wagyu, the *banchan* (small plates) are first-rate, and the pork belly is richly marbled. —*Jonathan Gold*

SANTA MONICA, CITY BY THE SEA

West of Downtown, the oceanfront town of Santa Monica has long sustained an eclectic food scene. In addition to culinary pioneers like **Border Grill** (1445 Fourth Street; 310/451-1655; www.bordergrill.com) and **Michael's** (1147 Third Street; 310/451-0843; www.michaelssantamonica.com), there are newer spots like Alain Giraud's one-year-old brasserie **Anisette** (225 Santa Monica Boulevard; 310/395-3200; www.anisettebrasserie.com), where servers arrive with silver trays of briny oysters and steaming pots of mussels. The smell of fresh-baked *ciabatta* wafts through **Bay Cities Italian Deli & Bakery** (1517 Lincoln Boulevard; 310/395-8279; www.baycitiesitaliandeli.com), an 85-year-old neighborhood hub; imported olive oils, dried pastas, and fancy vinegars line the aisles, but the main attraction is the godmother sandwich, stuffed with Genoa salami, mortadella, capicola, ham, prosciutto, and provolone. Crowds are the norm at the original location of **Father's Office** (1018 Montana Avenue; 310/736-2224; www.fathersoffice.com); this minuscule craft beer bar and gourmet burger shack serves hand-cut fries and its justly famous Office Burger: a dry-aged beef patty topped with delectable combinations like caramelized onions, bacon, and blue cheese. At **Mélisse** (1104 Wilshire Boulevard; 310/395-0881; www.melisse.com), chef Josiah Citrin's exquisite ode to California-French cuisine, try the poached egg topped with lemon–chive crème fraîche and American osetra caviar, or anything from the nightly tasting menu. An altogether different culinary vibe reigns at **Chez Jay** (1657 Ocean Avenue; 310/395-1741; www.chezjays.com), Santa Monica's go-to nautical dive for half a century; enjoy an herb butter–sauced steak and a classic cocktail while seated beneath the captain's wheel. Given the accessibility of superfresh organic produce, it's no surprise that the raw-food movement has taken root here; **Euphoria Loves Rawvolution** (2301 Main Street; 310/392-9501; www.euphorialovesrawvolution.com) specializes in vegan dishes made from uncooked fruits and vegetables. The thoughtful preparations include nachos and the raw-veggie Big Matt burger, served on the restaurant's own, flavorful onion bread. That restaurant, and dozens of others across LA, source their food at the **Santa Monica Farmers Market** (Wednesday mornings at Second Street and Arizona Avenue, pictured above; see www.smgov.net for locations on other days). A linchpin of Los Angeles's culinary culture since 1981, the market, comprising 75 vendor stalls, draws chefs and home cooks in search of things like rare herbs, farm-fresh eggs, just-picked Flame grapes, and even ladybugs and snails for organic gardening. —*Lesley Bargar Suter*





DELI CAPITAL OF THE WORLD

Los Angeles and its adjacent municipalities contain more continuously family-owned Jewish delis than any other city in the country. In the hands of third- and fourth-generation pro-

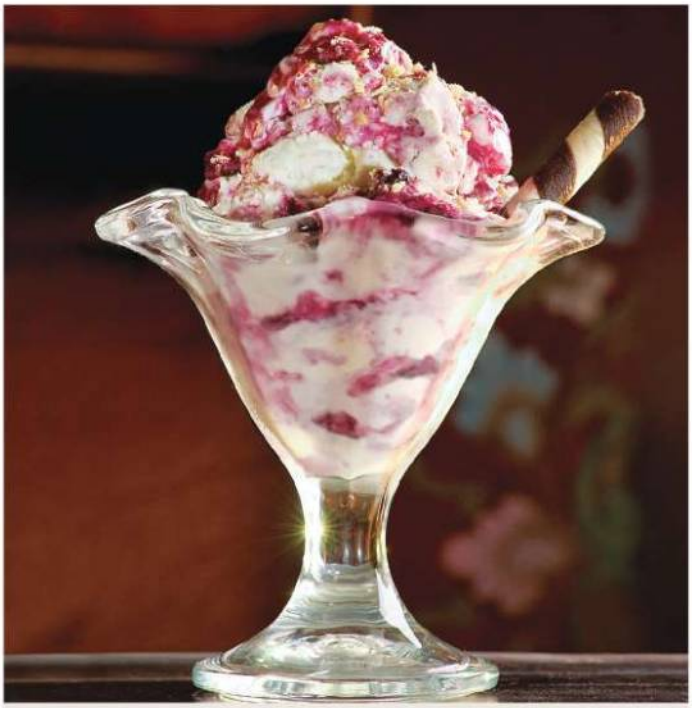
FROM LEFT: FRAN COLLIN; MAP: THE M FACTORY; LANDON NORDEMAN



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Introducing the NEW DOLE Salad Guide. Being the DOLE Salad Guide means I know everything about salad – and now you can too. The NEW Salad Guide from DOLE is a helpful packaging feature that will boost your culinary knowledge and help you explore the wide variety of delicious DOLE salads like a pro. With flavors that range from mild to bold and textures that take you from tender to crunchy, the new DOLE Salad Guide is all you'll need to start mixing it up and getting creative in the kitchen. I've even matched each salad blend with unique "Pairs well with..." ideas, like the perfect dressing and other tasty ingredients to help you create your next culinary masterpiece. With the DOLE Salad Guide on your side, you'll be a salad expert in no time – the possibilities are endless and the inspiration is right there on the bag.

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VALLEY GEMS The San Fernando Valley, to the northwest of downtown Los Angeles, encompasses over half of LA's acreage, plus outlying cities like Burbank and Calabasas; it's a sprawling, diverse place that offers road-worthy food lovers an abundance of good eating. If there's one food the Valley can claim as its own, it's sushi, and at the center of Studio City's renowned sushi strip is **Katsu-Ya** (11680 Ventura Boulevard; 818/985-6976; www.katsu-yagroup.com); chef Katsuya Uechi is now known for a chain of Philippe Starck–designed restaurants, but this humble original location is what inspired all the fuss: here, regulars crowd in for dishes like spicy tuna on crispy rice and strips of albacore with crunchy fried onions and a tangy shallot vinaigrette. At Tarzana's **Hummus Bar and Grill** (18743 Ventura Boulevard; 818/344-6606; www.hummusbargrill.com), bakers flatten balls of *laffa* dough and slide them into giant steel ovens; the flat bread accompanies the impressive spread of 12 Israeli salads including tabbouleh and a smoky baba ganouj. At the Saturday parking-lot barbecues at Burbank's **Handy Market** (2514 West Magnolia Boulevard; 818/848-2500; www.burbankshandymarket.com), beef tri-tip, chicken, and baby-back pork ribs get wrapped in foil and handed off to customers as quickly as more can be thrown on the hot grills. Peer into the kitchen at the Canoga Park branch of **Carrillo's Mexican Deli** (19744 Sherman Way; 818/887-6118), and you'll see women hand-forming the *taquería*'s chewy, fragrant corn tortillas, sold hot by the dozens, and also wrapped around tender *carnitas*. Decades before George Clooney named his production company after the spot (a favorite cocktail hangout), the **Smoke House** in Burbank (4420 West Lakeside Drive; 818/845-3731; www.smokehouse1946.com) was offering sizzling steaks, cheese bread, loaded baked potatoes, and stiff martinis, which come with a bonus carafe on the side. **Gelato Bar** in Tujunga Village (4342 ½ Tujunga Avenue; 818/487-1717; www.gelatobar-la.com) crafts 24 flavors of its namesake frozen treat, including Spicy Chocolate, Blood Orange, and berry-cheesecake Frutti Ricotta (pictured above); the colorful, Umbrian-inspired shop is run by Gail Silverton, sister of Nancy Silverton, of LA's acclaimed Pizzeria Mozza. —*L.B.S.*

prietors, family recipes for matzo ball soup, knishes, and latkes have evolved into high art. Arguably the best pastrami sandwich in America is served at **Langer's Deli** (704 South Alvarado Street; 213/483-8050; www.langersdeli.com), a 62-year-old institution in downtown Los Angeles. The expertly trimmed, long-steamed, hand-sliced meat is served warm on double-baked rye bread. In the San Fernando Valley, **Brent's** (19565 Parthenia Street, Northridge; 818/886-5679; www.brentsdeli.com) serves stellar house-cured corned beef and hearty cabbage soup thick with tender chunks of braised brisket. Regulars swear by the house-made kishke, a rich, smoky sausage of schmaltz (rendered chicken fat), vegetables, and matzo meal that's broiled until it's golden and crackly. Amid worn vinyl booths, Hollywood legends like Larry King, Monty Hall,



and other big *machers* shmooze daily at **Nate 'n Al** (414 North Beverly Drive, Beverly Hills; 310/274-0101; www.natenal.com) while feasting on eggy chopped liver and flaky smoked whitefish. The corned beef sandwiches and the short ribs in the flanken soup, made from certified Angus beef, are rich and tender. By day, **Canter's** (419 North Fairfax Avenue; 323/651-2030; www.cantersdeli.com; pictured above), a gargantuan Hollywood deli, is filled with the usual LA suspects: old bubbies sipping tea and eating cinnamon rugelach, hopeful young writers nibbling house-cured half-sour pickles while pecking away at screenplays. But at night, when the adjoining bar opens, scenesters pack into the place for giant bowls of chicken soup crowded with thin egg noodles, beef kreplach dumplings, and a single giant matzo ball. —*David Sax, author of* Save the Deli *(Houghton Mifflin, 2009)*

EVERY FLAVOR IN CHINA

Ten miles east of downtown Los Angeles, the San Gabriel Valley towns of Monterey Park, Alhambra, Rosemead, and San Gabriel constitute America's largest Chinatown—one of wide boulevards and glittering shopping malls, thriving shops, and a smorgasbord of regional cuisines. A good place to begin a visit is the intersection of Atlantic Boulevard and Garvey Avenue; there, you'll find the elegant **Duck House** (501 South Atlantic Boulevard, Monterey Park; 626/284-3227; www.pearlcatering.com), where proprietor Catherine Fong creates one-of-a-kind dishes like Buddha chicken (a whole boneless chicken stuffed with taro,



yams, sea cucumber, and scallops, then deep-fried and steamed) and Peking duck "three ways": a sandwich of crispy duck skin, a stir-fry of duck meat and mung bean sprouts, and a savory duck soup. (Both dishes require pre-ordering, so call ahead.) For a taste of old Shanghai, head for **Lake Spring Shanghai Restaurant** (219 East Garvey Avenue, Monterey Park; 626/280-3571), where red-cooked pork (a bone-in fresh ham simmered in soy sauce, rock sugar, and cassia) has been a standby with locals for years. At **Savoy Kitchen** (138 East Valley Boulevard, Alhambra; 626/308-9535), a young crowd queues up on the sidewalk for Hainanese chicken rice, a dish of poached chicken and rice made with a deep, rich chicken stock. Another popular spot is **Liang's Kitchen** (227 West Valley Boulevard, San Gabriel;

FROM LEFT: RYAN FORBES; COURTESY CANTER FAMILY; ARIANA LINDQUIST; MAP: THE M FACTORY; PENNY DE LOS SANTOS; LANDON NORDEMAN

626/281-1898; pictured on page 84), a Taiwanese restaurant serving "military base" cuisine, a style of cooking that traces its roots to 1949, when Chiang Kai-shek's army retreated to Taiwan and its cooks prepared regional Chinese dishes with Taiwanese ingredients. The result is an amalgam of regional styles. Liang's "special onion dry noodle," based on a Shanghainese snack, is a nest of noodles atop soy-based broth, topped with caramelized scallions and a fried egg (see page 89 for a recipe). A few blocks away, **Hunan Chilli King** (534 East Valley Boulevard, San Gabriel; 626/288-7993) dishes up honest (that is, scintillatingly hot) versions of Hunan peasant cooking; the pork with brown sauce (pork belly braised in soy sauce and chiles) and the stir-fries of dried fish are not to be missed. **Battambang** (1806 South San Gabriel Boulevard, San Gabriel; 626/307-3938), a Cam-



bodian-Chinese restaurant, also offers hot and spicy fare: dishes like deep-fried chopped crab baked in a richly aromatic curry. **Dumpling 10053** (10053 Valley Boulevard, El Monte; 626/350-0188) serves a taste of northern China; the boiled pork–crab–sea cucumber dumplings are outstanding, as are the steamed pumpkin–shrimp dumplings: both are pillowy morsels in precise, pyramidal shapes, a perfect balance of sweet and savory. —*Carl Chu, author of* Chinese Food Finder *(Crossbridge, 2004)*

DRINK CITY

A half dozen years ago, when I was editing a nightlife guide to Los Angeles, the city was awash in appletinis and Red Bull with vodka. Today, given a renewed attention to mixology and artisanal ingredients, I'm happy to say that LA's cocktail scene is in the midst of a delicious renaissance. Much of the action is located downtown, where **The Edison** (108 West Second Street; 213/613-0000; www.edisondowntown.com), housed in a huge, gloriously restored 1910 power plant, pays homage to LA's past with tipples like the Brown Derby, a grapefruit-and-honey-laced bourbon cocktail. Nearby, at the hunting lodge–like **Seven Grand** (515 West Seventh Street; 213/614-0737; www.sevengrand.la), nearly 300 rare and premium whiskeys, ryes, and bourbons find their way across the hand-carved black walnut bar. A couple of blocks away at **Rivera** (1050 South Flower Street; 213/749-1460; www.riverarestaurant.com), Latin spirits star in cocktails like the mezcal-and-ginger Barbacoa (below), spiked with chipotle, garnished with beef jerky, and designed to complement chef



John Sedlar's modern Latin food. But Downtown doesn't have a monopoly on craft cocktails. In West Hollywood at the **Roger Room** (370 North La Cienega Boulevard; 310/854-1300) amid funhouse décor, locals sip ballsy potions like the Thug (bourbon, honey liqueur, fresh lemon juice, and habanero bitters), and it's a short distance from the Santa Monica Farmers Market to the airy **Copa d'Oro** (217 Broadway; 310/576-3030; www.copadoro.com), where custom drinks are created on the spot using a patron's choice of fresh produce. Craft beer is also hot now in LA; at Glassell Park's suds-and-music club **Verdugo** (3408 Verdugo Road; 323/257-3408; www.verdugobar.com), hipsters sip more than 80 brews, including esoterica like Stone Brewing Company's smoked porter, hand-pulled from the cask. And, this being California, the city plays host to more than a few topflight wine bars, including Hollywood's **Lou** (724 Vine Street; 323/962-6369; www.louonvine.com), where farm-to-table dinners feature biodynamic, old-vine, and otherwise intriguing bottles. Of course, Los Angeles is also blessed with the sun and the sea; when I just want to relax over a martini with a Pacific view, the swank **Lobby Lounge at Shutters on the Beach** in Santa Monica (1 Pico Boulevard; 310/458-0030; www.shuttersonthebeach.com) does the trick. —*Betsy Andrews*



DIP IT Either a restaurant owner nicknamed Frenchie accidentally dropped sandwich bread into a pan of gravy or a chef at a different eatery dipped the bread on purpose to soften it for a customer with sore gums. But whether it was created at **Philippe's** (1001 North Alameda Street; 213-628-3781; www.philippes.com) in 1918 or at **Cole's** (118 East Sixth Street; 213-622-4090; www.colesfrenchdip.com) in 1908, the French dip, perhaps LA's oldest sandwich, is delicious at both places. The difference between the Downtown rivals is in the presentation. At the cafeteria-like Philippe's, counter servers construct your meal in front of you, dunking the slow-roasted beef, pork, or lamb sandwich to your liking: "single dip," "double dip," or sopping "wet." You can enjoy it there with a ten-cent coffee or a Silver Oak cabernet, but either way, it's an earthy experience. At the recently renovated Cole's, your pastrami or turkey-Swiss sandwich (pictured above, with bartender Dennis Lewin) is served to you undipped, its rich gravy on the side. With its mahogany bar, red booths, and Tiffany stained glass, Cole's is a destination for nightclubbers as well as sandwich lovers; a door in the back of the dining room leads to The Varnish, a speakeasy with a menu of handcrafted cocktails. But Cole's raison d'être, just like that of Philippe's, is that glorious, LA-born dip. —*Betsy Andrews*

TRAVEL INFO Contact **Virgin America** (877/359-8474; www.virginamerica.com) for information on flights to Los Angeles from major American cities. For our tips on places to stay—including the **SLS Hotel at Beverly Hills**, the **Standard Downtown**, and the **Andaz West Hollywood**—go to SAVEUR.COM/LAGUIDE.

First Courses

BEET AND GOAT CHEESE NAPOLEONS

SERVES 4

These elegant appetizers come from Spago (see page 44).

- 5 large red beets, roasted, peeled, and cut crosswise into ¼"-thick slices
- 1 cup rice vinegar
- 1 cup sugar
- 9 oz. goat cheese, softened
- 4 tsp. minced fresh chives
- 4 tsp. minced fresh parsley
- 2½ tsp. minced fresh thyme
- 1 tsp. freshly ground black pepper
- ¾ cup fresh orange juice
- 1 tbsp. balsamic vinegar
- ¼ tsp. orange zest
- 1 small shallot, minced
- 3 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 3 tbsp. hazelnut oil
- Kosher salt, to taste
- 3 tbsp. chopped hazelnuts

1 Using a 2⅝" round cookie cutter, cut out 20 of the beet slices; reserve scraps for another use (like borscht or a salad). In a 12" skillet, bring rice vinegar and sugar to a boil. Reduce heat to medium-low and, working in batches, cook beet slices, turning once, about 2 minutes. Transfer slices to a paper towel–lined baking sheet. Pat dry and let chill.

2 Stir goat cheese together with the chives, parsley, 2 tsp. thyme, and pepper in a bowl. Set aside.

3 Bring orange juice to a boil in a 1-qt. saucepan over medium-high heat. Cook until reduced to ⅓ cup, 4–5 minutes. Let cool. Transfer juice to a bowl along with remaining thyme, balsamic vinegar, zest, and shallots. While whisking, drizzle in olive oil and hazelnut oil; whisk until smooth. Season vinaigrette with salt and pepper; let chill.

4 To serve: Put 1 beet slice on work surface; spread about 1 tbsp. cheese mixture over beet. Top cheese with another beet slice, pressing down so cheese oozes to edge. Repeat to create a stack with 4 layers of cheese between 5 beet slices. Make 4 stacks in all. Slice each stack into 4 wedges; transfer to 4 plates. Drizzle vinaigrette over each plate; garnish with nuts. Serve with mixed greens, if you like.

EGGPLANT SPREAD

MAKES 2½ CUPS

Los Angeles home cook Ruth Honegger recommends eating this spicy spread (pictured on page 41) with pita, lavash, or naan.

- 1¾ lbs. eggplant, cut crosswise into ¼" slices
- 5 tbsp. canola oil
- 1 tsp. fennel seeds
- ½ tsp. black onion seeds (see page 100)
- 1 tbsp. ground coriander
- ¼ tsp. cayenne pepper
- ¼ tsp. ground turmeric
- 6 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 medium tomatoes, chopped
- 1 1" piece fresh ginger, peeled and minced
- Kosher salt, to taste
- ½ cup minced cilantro
- Toasted flat bread, for serving

1 Arrange an oven rack 4" from broiler; set oven to broil. Put eggplant on a baking sheet; brush with 3 tbsp. oil. Broil, flipping once, until browned and soft, about 6 minutes. Let cool.

2 Heat remaining oil in a 12" skillet over medium heat. Add fennel and onion seeds; cook until toasted, 1–2 minutes. Add coriander, cayenne, turmeric, garlic, tomatoes, and ginger and season with salt; cook until thickened, 2–3 minutes. Add eggplant and reduce heat to medium-low; cook until tender, 8–10 minutes. Remove from heat; stir in cilantro. Mash eggplant with a wooden spoon. Serve with flat bread.

HORTOPITA

(Fennel and Herb Phyllo Pastries)

MAKES 10–12 PASTRIES

These Greek pastries (pictured on page 41) unite a buttery crust with bright-tasting fennel and feta.

- 4 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 bunch Swiss chard (about 1¾ lbs.), stemmed and chopped
- ½ small white onion, minced
- ½ small bulb fennel (with stalks and fronds), minced
- 3 oz. feta, crumbled
- 1 tbsp. minced flat-leaf parsley
- 3 scallions, thinly sliced
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1 16-oz. package frozen phyllo dough, thawed
- 6 tbsp. unsalted butter, melted

1 Heat 2 tbsp. oil in a 12" nonstick skillet over high heat. Working in 2 batches, add chard and cook, stirring frequently, until wilted, about 4 minutes. Transfer chard to a large sieve and press with a wooden spoon to extract excess liquid; set aside.

2 Return skillet to medium-high heat and add remaining oil. Add onions and fennel and cook, stirring occasionally, until soft, about 20 minutes. Transfer onion mixture to a bowl; stir in chard, feta, parsley, and scallions. Season filling with salt and pepper; let chill.

3 Heat oven to 375°. Cut stacked phyllo lengthwise into 4½"-wide strips; cover with a damp towel. Set aside. Put 1 strip phyllo on a surface and brush with some of the butter; top with another strip and brush with more butter. Repeat once more. Put ⅓ cup filling on one end of strip 1" from the end. Fold in a corner of that end to form a triangle. Then fold in that triangular edge to form another triangle; continue folding as you would a flag, until you have a triangular pastry. Transfer pastry to a baking sheet. Repeat; brush pastries with remaining butter. Bake until golden brown, 18–20 minutes.

KALE AND AVOCADO SALAD

SERVES 4–6

Elf in LA's Echo Park serves a version of this refreshing Japanese-inspired salad (pictured on page 66).

- ½ cup fresh orange juice
- 3 tbsp. fresh lemon juice
- 2 tsp. soy sauce
- 1 clove garlic, smashed and chopped into a paste
- 4 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 3 avocados, halved, pitted, and peeled
- 2 tbsp. raw hemp seeds (optional; see page 100)
- 1 bunch kale (about ¾ lb.), stemmed and finely chopped
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

1 Whisk together juices, soy sauce, and garlic in a bowl. Slowly whisk in oil; set dressing aside.

2 Cut 2 avocados into ½" cubes and thinly slice the remaining avocado. Put cubed avocados, half of the hemp seeds, and kale into a serving bowl. Toss kale mixture with dressing and season generously with salt and pepper. Divide salad between plates and garnish with sliced avocado and remaining hemp seeds.

WINTER SALAD WITH BUTTERMILK DRESSING

SERVES 2–4

Chef Suzanne Goin reinvents the Waldorf salad in this appetizer (pictured on page 92).

- 1 egg yolk
- ½ cup plus 2 tbsp. grapeseed oil
- ¼ cup buttermilk
- ¼ cup crème fraîche
- 2 tbsp. minced shallot
- 1½ tbsp. fresh lemon juice
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1 lb. mixed green lettuces
- ¾ cup walnuts, toasted
- 1 tart apple, thinly sliced
- 1 raw medium beet, very thinly sliced

1 Put yolk into a bowl and, whisking, drizzle in oil. Stir in buttermilk, crème fraîche, shallots, and lemon juice. Season dressing with salt and pepper.

PENNY DE LOS SANTOS



Moroccan chicken with carrot purée (see page 90 for a recipe).





ALL NATURAL
ALEXIA
ROASTED RED POTATOES & BABY PORTABELLA MUSHROOMS

❷ Toss lettuces in a bowl with three-fourths of dressing; season with salt and pepper. Divide salad between plates. Garnish with nuts, apples, and beets; drizzle with dressing.

Main Courses

CONG YOU BAN MIAN

(Noodles with Fried Scallions)

SERVES 4

Crunchy, flash-fried scallions top this Taiwanese dish (pictured at right), an excellent version of which is served at Liang's Kitchen in San Gabriel, California (see page 84).

- **Canola oil, for frying**
- **12 scallions, white and light green parts only, julienned**
- **1 cup chicken broth**
- **2 tbsp. soy sauce**
- **2 pods star anise**
- **1 2" piece fresh ginger, peeled and smashed**
- **Kosher salt, to taste**
- **1 lb. dried or fresh Asian wheat noodles (see page 100)**
- **4 eggs**

❶ Pour oil into a 1-qt. saucepan to a depth of 1"; heat over medium heat until a thermometer reads 325°. Add scallions; cook until crisp, 2–4 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer scallions to paper towels. Reserve oil and transfer 2 tbsp. to a 1-qt. saucepan. Add broth, soy sauce, star anise, and ginger; boil. Remove from heat; let rest 5 minutes. Strain broth; set aside.

❷ Bring a 6-qt. pot of salted water to a boil. Add noodles; cook until tender, 8-10 minutes. Meanwhile, heat 2 tbsp. of the reserved oil in a 12" nonstick skillet over medium heat. Add eggs, cover, and cook, sunny side up, about 3 minutes. To serve, divide broth and noodles between 4 bowls. Top noodles with an egg and some of the scallions.

CREOLE-STYLE FRIED FISH

SERVES 4

This recipe was given to us by Lonnée Hamilton, who recommends spooning some bacon grease into the frying oil to give the fish (pictured on page 64) a smokier flavor.

- **4 cups vegetable shortening or oil**
- **3 tbsp. bacon grease (optional)**
- **1 cup flour**
- **1 cup yellow cornmeal**
- **Lawry's Seasoned Salt and ground black pepper, to taste**
- **1 cup milk**
- **8 6-8-oz. whole head-on bluegill, perch, or other small fresh-water fish, cleaned**
- **Tartar sauce, for serving**

Heat shortening and bacon grease in a 12" skillet over medium-high heat until a deep-fry thermometer registers 350°. Whisk together flour, cornmeal, Lawry's, and pepper in a bowl. Transfer half the cornmeal mixture into another bowl. Put milk into a medium bowl. Working in batches, roll fish in cornmeal mixture, transfer to milk (shaking off excess), and dredge in second bowl of cornmeal mixture. Using tongs, fry 4 fish, turning occasionally, until golden brown and cooked through, about 5 minutes. Repeat and serve with tartar sauce.



Noodles with fried scallions (recipe appears at left).

CRISPY DUCK WITH UDON NOODLES

SERVES 2

The recipe for this entrée (pictured on page 51) was given to us by Off the Shelf, a film catering company.

- **2 duck legs**
- **Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste**
- **1 cup chicken or duck broth**
- **¾ cup soy sauce**
- **1 cup white wine vinegar**
- **1 tbsp. coriander seeds**
- **3 red or green Thai chiles**
- **2 tbsp. sugar**
- **2 tbsp. minced garlic**
- **1 tbsp. minced ginger**
- **1 tbsp. sesame seeds**
- **1 tbsp. Dijon mustard**
- **1 tsp. Asian sesame oil**
- **1 scallion, minced**
- **6 oz. udon noodles (see page 100)**
- **5 tbsp. canola oil**
- **2 cups oyster mushrooms**
- **6 heads baby bok choy (about 12 oz.), leaves separated**

❶ Make the duck: Heat oven to 350°. Season duck with salt and pepper. Heat a 12" nonstick skillet over medium heat. Add duck, skin side down, and cook, turning once, until browned and crisp, 18–20 minutes. Transfer duck to paper towels; discard fat. In a 5-qt. Dutch oven, bring broth, ½ cup soy sauce, vinegar, coriander, 1 chile, and 1 cup water to a boil. Add duck, skin side up, cover, and transfer to oven. Braise until duck is tender, about 1 hour 45 minutes. Set duck aside; discard liquid.

❷ Meanwhile, make the sauce: In a 1-qt. saucepan, bring remaining soy sauce, sugar, garlic, ginger, sesame seeds, mustard, sesame oil, and scallions to a boil. Set sauce aside.

❸ Make the noodles: Bring a 4-qt. pot of lightly salted water to a boil. Add noodles; cook until just tender, 2-3 minutes. Drain noodles; toss with 1 tbsp. canola oil. Heat 2 tbsp. canola oil in a 12" skillet over medium-high heat. Add remaining chiles, mushrooms, and bok choy; cook until bok choy is just wilted, about 6 minutes. Add noodles and ½ cup of the sauce; toss to combine. Keep noodles warm.

❹ To serve, heat remaining canola oil in a 12" nonstick skillet over medium-high heat; add duck, skin side down. Cook until crisp, 4–5 minutes. Pat duck with paper towels. Brush duck with remaining sauce. Serve atop noodles.

FISH TACOS

SERVES 4

Adding beer to the batter will help the fish for these tacos (pictured on page 62) fry up golden brown.

- **1½ cups shredded green cabbage**
- **2 limes (1 cut into wedges)**
- **1½ tbsp. kosher salt, plus more to taste**
- **2 cups flour**
- **½ cup cornstarch**
- **1 12-oz. bottle dark beer**
- **1 egg**

ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI

Canola oil, for frying
1 lb. boneless, skinless red snapper, cut into 1½" strips
2 tsp. chili powder
16 corn tortillas
¼ red onion, thinly sliced
4 sprigs cilantro, chopped
1 tomato, cored and chopped
Sour cream or crema
Mexican hot sauce

❶ In a bowl, combine cabbage and juice of 1 lime; season with salt, to taste; chill. In another bowl, whisk together 1½ tbsp. salt, 1½ cups flour, cornstarch, beer, and egg to make a batter.

❷ Pour oil into a 5-qt. Dutch oven to a depth of 2"; heat until a thermometer reads 375˚. Sprinkle fish with chili powder and salt. Put remaining flour on a plate. Dredge fish in flour; shake off excess. Working in batches, dip fish in batter and fry until crisp, about 3 minutes. Transfer to a rack set inside a sheet pan; keep warm in 200˚ oven.

❸ Heat a skillet over medium-high heat. Working in batches, add tortillas; cook, flipping, until warmed. To serve, layer 2 tortillas together, fill with some of the fish and cabbage, squeeze with a lime wedge, and garnish with onion, cilantro, tomato, sour cream, and hot sauce. Repeat.

HUEVOS RANCHEROS

SERVE 4

Based on a recipe from La Abeja, a restaurant on LA's east side, these fried eggs smothered in tomato sauce (pictured on page 55) can be eaten morning, noon, or night.

14 plum tomatoes, cored
12 tbsp. canola oil
3 cloves garlic, minced
½ jalapeño, stemmed and minced
½ medium yellow onion, chopped
1 tbsp. fresh lime juice
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
8 corn tortillas
8 eggs
Pickled jalapeño slices, for garnish

❶ Heat a 12" cast-iron skillet over high heat. Add tomatoes; cook, turning, until skins blacken, 8–10 minutes. Peel tomatoes; purée in blender; strain; set aside.

❷ Heat 4 tbsp. oil in a 4-qt. pan over medium heat. Add garlic, jalapeños, and onions; cook until soft, 6–8 minutes. Add tomatoes; boil. Stir in lime juice; season with salt and pepper.

❸ Working in 4 batches, heat 1 tbsp. oil in a 12" nonstick skillet over medium-high heat; add 2 tortillas; cook, flipping once, until warmed, about 20 seconds. Transfer tortillas to 4 plates. Working in 2 batches, heat remaining oil in skillet over medium heat; cook eggs to desired doneness. Top each tortilla with a fried egg and tomato sauce. Garnish with pickled jalapeños.

KEPPLER'S SPECIAL

SERVES 2

This breakfast dish (pictured on page 77) is popular at the Sugar Shack, in Huntington Beach.

1 tsp. fresh lemon juice
3 egg yolks plus 6 eggs
10 tbsp. unsalted butter, melted
Tabasco, to taste
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
2 English muffins, split and toasted
1 medium tomato, sliced
1 avocado, halved, pitted, and sliced
6 cooked strips of bacon

❶ Pour water into a 2-qt. pot to a depth of 1"; bring to a low simmer. In a metal bowl, whisk lemon juice, yolks, and 2 tbsp. water. Nestle bowl over simmering water; cook, whisking constantly, until thick, 2–3 minutes. Remove from heat and, while whisking, drizzle in 8 tbsp. butter to make a sauce. Season with Tabasco and salt and pepper. Keep hollandaise warm.

❷ Heat remaining butter in a 10" nonstick skillet over medium-low heat. Lightly beat eggs, add to skillet, and scramble, 2–3 minutes. Top muffins with tomatoes, avocados, bacon, and eggs. Spoon sauce over top.

KOREAN FRIED CHICKEN

SERVES 2–4

Double frying is the secret to achieving the delicate, crackly crust that is the hallmark of this popular specialty (pictured on page 15).

Canola oil, for frying
5 cloves garlic
1 1½" piece peeled ginger
3 tbsp. soy sauce
3 tbsp. gojujang (Korean chile paste; see page 100)
1½ tbsp. rice vinegar
1 tbsp. Asian sesame oil
1 tbsp. honey
⅔ cup flour
1 tbsp. cornstarch
16 chicken wings (about 1¾ lbs.)

Pour oil into a 6-qt. pot to a depth of 2". Heat over medium-high heat until a thermometer reads 350˚. Chop garlic and ginger in a food processor. Add soy, gojujang, vinegar, sesame oil, and honey; purée. Put sauce into a bowl. Whisk flour, cornstarch, and ⅔ cup water in another bowl. Add chicken; toss. Working in 3 batches, fry chicken until golden, 6–8 minutes. Drain on paper towels. Return oil to 350˚. Fry chicken until crisp, 6–8 minutes more. Drain again. Toss chicken in sauce.

KUKU KADOO

(Persian Zucchini Frittata)

SERVES 6–8

Noura Samimi of Manhattan Beach serves this dish (pictured on page 20) with rice.

3 tbsp. canola oil
¼ tsp. minced fresh ginger
3 large onions, chopped
3 cloves garlic, minced
1 tsp. ground turmeric
5 medium zucchini, halved lengthwise and cut crosswise into ¼"-thick slices
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
4 tbsp. flour
½ tsp. baking soda
7 eggs, beaten
2 tbsp. chopped parsley
Sumac, for garnish

Heat oven to 400°. Heat 2 tbsp. oil in a 12" skillet over medium-high heat. Add ginger, onions, and garlic; cook until soft, 6–8 minutes. Add turmeric and zucchini; season with salt and pepper; cook until tender, 12–15 minutes. Stir in 3 tbsp. flour and baking soda; let cool. Stir eggs into zucchini mixture. Grease a 9" x 13" casserole with remaining oil; sprinkle with remaining flour; pour in mixture. Bake until set, 25–30 minutes. Garnish with parsley and sumac.

MOROCCAN CHICKEN WITH CARROT PURÉE

SERVES 6

A mix of spicy, sweet, and bitter flavors gives this dish (pictured on page 87) its distinctive character. The recipe comes from chef Suzanne Goin.

6 boneless skin-on chicken breasts, pounded ¾" thick
16 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
4 cups chicken broth
2 lbs. carrots, cut into ¼" rounds
1 large white onion, minced
1½ cups fresh orange juice
4 tbsp. unsalted butter
2 peeled oranges, segmented
¾ cup plus 2 tsp. harissa (see page 100)
2 tsp. sherry vinegar
3 oz. dandelion greens
¾ cup pitted oil-cured black olives, roughly chopped
2 shallots, thinly sliced

❶ Put chicken into a dish; drizzle with 3 tbsp. oil; season with salt and pepper. Set aside. Bring broth to a boil in a 6-qt. pan over medium-high heat. Add carrots; cook until tender, 15–20 minutes. Drain. Heat ½ cup oil in a 4-qt. pot over high heat. Add onions; cook until soft, 4–5 minutes. Add carrots;

More recipes from LA at SAVEUR.COM/ISSUE127

SAVEUR MENU

SAVEUR's guide to EVENTS, PROMOTIONS & PRODUCTS



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HOLIDAY POT-LUCK PHOTOS: DANIEL KRIEGER

SAVEUR's Pot-Luck Holiday Party

On December 8, 2009, SAVEUR held its first ever Pot-Luck Holiday Party in the SAVEUR test kitchen. We invited 14 top New York City chefs to share dishes that not only reflected their culture and traditions, but served as inspiration for their famed cuisines. Throughout the evening, guests mingled with chefs and tasted their flavorful creations, which ran the gamut from bacon-topped cupcakes to goat curry to truffled macaroni and cheese. The house was filled throughout the night with music and laughter, making for the perfect end to a fantastic year!



Alongside the chefs' specialties, we served Allen Brothers Beef Tenderloin Sandwiches, Kerrygold Irish Cheese, and Godiva Legacy Truffles. The bar was busy all night serving Patrón Espresso Martinis, Ultimat Vodka Holiday Cocktails, Dogfish Head beer, and more!

CHEFS INCLUDED:

Marco Canora, *Hearth & Terroir*
Scott Conant, *Scarpetta*
John DeLucie, *Waverly Inn*
Alexandra Guarnaschelli, *Butter*
Gavin Kaysen, *Café Boulud*
Michael Laiskonis, *Le Bernardin*
Chris Lee, *Aureole*
George Mendes, *Aldea*
Seamus Mullen, *Boqueria*
Pichet Ong, *Spot Dessert Bar*
Zak Pelaccio, *Fatty Crab*
Michael Psilakis, *Anthos, Kefi, Gus & Gabriel*
Aarón Sánchez, *Centrico & Paladar*
Bill Telepan, *Telepan*

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cook for 6–8 minutes. Purée in a food processor with 2 tbsp. oil. Season with salt and pepper; keep warm.

❷ Heat orange juice in a 2-qt. pan over medium-high heat. Cook until reduced by half, 12–15 minutes. Whisk in butter; season with salt and pepper. Add orange segments; set sauce aside.

❸ Heat oven to 400°. Heat a grill pan over medium-high heat. Working in 3 batches, add chicken, skin side down; cook until crisp, 8–10 minutes. Transfer chicken, skin side up, to a baking sheet. Brush with ¾ cup harissa. Bake until cooked, 6–8 minutes.

❹ In a bowl, whisk together remaining oil and harissa with sherry vinegar. Add greens, olives, and shallots; toss. Divide carrot purée between 6 plates; top each with salad and a chicken breast. Spoon sauce over each.

POLLO ARROSTO

(Lemon and Rosemary Chicken)

SERVES 4

Evan Kleiman of Angeli Caffe gave us the recipe for this simple, aromatic roast chicken (pictured on page 76).

- **1 3½-lb. chicken, cut into 8 pieces**
- **½ cup extra-virgin olive oil**
- **½ cup fresh rosemary leaves**
- **¼ cup fresh lemon juice**
- **10 cloves garlic, thinly sliced**
- **1 lemon, peel removed, pith and pulp chopped**
- **Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste**

❶ Toss chicken with oil, rosemary, lemon juice, garlic, lemon, and salt and pepper in bowl. Marinate for 1 hour.

❷ Heat oven to 475°. Arrange chicken in a 9" x 13" baking dish; add remaining marinade. Roast, flipping once, until cooked through, 30–40 minutes.

PUPUSAS CON CURTIDO

(Masa Cakes with Spicy Slaw)

SERVES 4

These stuffed corn-masa cakes (pictured on page 70) are the national dish of El Salvador.

- **¼ cup distilled white vinegar**
- **1½ tsp. sugar**
- **1 tsp. oregano**
- **2 chiles de árbol, crushed**
- **½ large carrot, peeled and grated**
- **½ yellow onion, thinly sliced**
- **¼ head green cabbage, shredded**
- **Kosher salt, to taste**
- **2 cups masa harina (see page 100)**
- **16 oz. grated Monterey jack**



Winter salad with buttermilk dressing (recipe appears on page 86).

Combine vinegar, sugar, oregano, chiles, carrots, onions, and cabbage in a bowl. Season with salt; toss; let chill. Put masa harina and 1¾ cups water into a bowl; stir to form a dough. Pinch off a 1½-oz. piece of dough; roll it into a ball. Pat dough into a thin disk. Squeeze 1¼ oz. cheese into a ball. Press cheese into center of dough; cupping dough, stretch edges of dough around cheese and seal. Pat dough to form a 3½"-wide disk. Repeat to make 12 pupusas in all. Heat a 12" nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Working in 3 batches, cook pupusas, turning, until golden, 10–12 minutes. Serve hot with slaw.

SQUASH BLOSSOM PIZZA

MAKES FOUR 10" PIZZAS

This recipe, inspired by Pizzeria Mozza (see page 47), yields a crisp, chewy crust. See page 95 for a sauce recipe and more tips for making pizza.

- **9 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for drizzling**
- **1 tbsp. active dry yeast**
- **1 tbsp. sugar**
- **1 tsp. kosher salt, plus more to taste**
- **6 cups flour**
- **2 cups pizza sauce (see page 95)**
- **60 squash blossoms, stemmed (see page 100)**
- **1 lb. burrata (see page 100)**

❶ In a bowl, combine 1 tbsp. oil, yeast, sugar, salt, and 2 cups 115° water; let sit until foamy, 10–12 minutes. Stir in flour to make a dough. Transfer dough to a floured surface; knead until smooth, 8–10 minutes. Quarter dough; roll each portion into a ball. Put balls on a floured baking sheet. Cover with plastic wrap; let sit in a warm place until soft and tripled in size, 2–3 hours.

❷ Place a pizza stone on a rack in lower third of oven. Heat oven to 500° for 1 hour. Transfer 1 dough ball to a floured 16½" x 12¼" piece parchment paper. Working from center, gently flatten dough with fingertips, leaving edges thicker than middle. Stretch dough to a 10" diameter. Cover dough with a tea towel; let rest for 15 minutes. Brush edges with 2 tbsp. oil. Season dough with salt. Spread ½ cup pizza sauce over dough, leaving a 1" border. Arrange 15 squash blossoms over sauce in concentric circles. Transfer pizza (on paper) to stone; bake until golden brown, 10–14 minutes. Remove pizza with a spatula. Top with spoonfuls of burrata; drizzle with olive oil. Repeat to make 4 pizzas.

Drinks

PUKA PUNCH

MAKES 1 COCKTAIL

Dark or white rum may be substituted for any of the rums in this recipe from LA's Tiki-Ti bar (see page 22).

- **2 oz. white rum**
- **1 oz. fresh lime juice**
- **¾ oz. dark Jamaican rum**
- **¾ oz. fresh orange juice**
- **¾ oz. pineapple juice**
- **¾ oz. passion fruit syrup (see page 100)**
- **2 tsp. honey mixed with 2 tsp. hot water, chilled**
- **¼ oz. falernum (see page 100)**
- **1 dash Angostura bitters**
- **¾ oz. 151-proof rum (optional)**
- **Pineapple slice, orange wedge, and maraschino cherry**

Put 1½ cups ice cubes into a blender; crush. Add first 9 ingredients; blend on high speed. Pour into a tall glass. Slowly pour 151-proof rum over back of a spoon into cocktail. Garnish with pineapple, orange, and cherry.

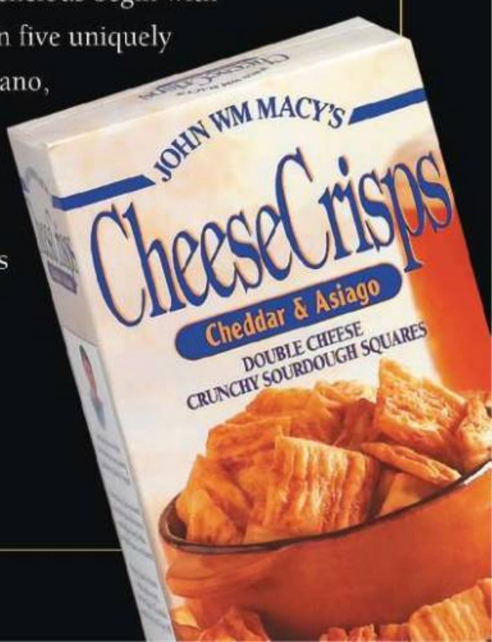
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IN THE SAVEUR

KITCHEN

Discoveries and Techniques from Our Favorite Room in the House » Edited by Todd Coleman



TODD COLEMAN (5)

Pizza Perfect

TO MAKE a pizza with a pillowy crust and golden edges like the Neapolitan-style pies served at Pizzeria Mozza in Hollywood (see "Mighty Fine Pie," page 47), you need good ingredients and a little practice. And you need heat. Serious heat. At Mozza, that heat comes from a wood-burning oven that can reach 700 degrees. Most home cooks don't have a wood-burning oven, and neither does the SAVEUR test kitchen. So, when we started testing the recipe for Mozza's squash blossom pizza (see page 92 for a recipe), the first tool we got out was our Old Stone Oven–brand pizza stone: a heavy, rectangular firebrick slab that sits on the oven rack, absorbing and radiating heat. First we tried baking the pie on the stone using the broiler, but that method yielded overcooked toppings and an underdone crust. Next time around, we heated the oven to 500 degrees and allowed the stone to heat up for a full hour before putting the pizza in. After an hour, the superheated stone had reached a temperature of 550 degrees (we checked using an infrared culinary thermometer). The results? A splendid pizza, with a puffed-up crust from the intense ambient heat and a nicely charred bottom, from the hot stone. See the facing page for four more tips on making a perfect pie. —*Hunter Lewis*

Making and Baking the Pie

1 Make the sauce For many of their pizzas, the cooks at Pizzeria Mozza use an uncooked sauce of puréed canned tomatoes. It has a brighter tomato flavor and a more vivid color than the sweet, thick, long-simmered sauces commonly found on American pizzas. To make the sauce, put one 28-oz. can of whole peeled San Marzano tomatoes into the bowl of a food processor, along with 1 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil, 1 tsp. dried basil, 2 minced cloves garlic, and half a grated medium onion. Purée and season with salt and pepper.

2 Shape the dough Dust a 16 ¼" x 12 ¼" sheet of parchment paper with flour and lightly flour your hands. Place a ball of dough (see page 92 for the recipe) in the center and use your fingertips to press, pat, and stretch the dough into a 10" circle, leaving a 1" rim of thicker dough. Once you become more comfortable with the dough, try this technique: make two fists and rest the flattened dough on your knuckles; lightly bounce the dough on your fists, allowing the weight of the dough to stretch it gently. If you like, make an extra batch of dough to use just for practice, until you've found a technique that works for you.

3 Let the dough rest To make a fluffier, chewier crust, leave the shaped dough on the parchment paper, covered with a tea towel, and let it rise for 15 minutes.

4 Top and cook Uncover the dough and top with the sauce and other desired ingredients. When you're ready to bake, just leave the pizza on the parchment paper, lift it by gripping the paper at opposite corners, and lay it carefully atop the preheated pizza stone; this eliminates the need for a pizza peel, the paddle-like tool used for getting pies in and out of hot ovens at restaurants. The paper will turn dark but will not burn in a 500º oven and is thin enough not to interfere with the browning of the crust. When the pizza is done, use a metal spatula to slide the pizza onto a plate or a cutting board.


1


2


3


4

This Color Won't Run

THE BEET IS A remarkable vegetable: imbued with a deep, reddish-purple color and endowed with ferulic acids, which prevent the flesh from breaking down during cooking, the resiliently firm vegetable lends itself to dramatic preparations like the beet and goat cheese napoleons served at Wolfgang Puck's restaurant Spago, in Beverly Hills (see page 86 for the recipe). When we set out to test the recipe for that dish, we noticed that Puck calls for roasting the beets instead of boiling them. After trying a few variations on Puck's original, we figured out why. Although boiling beets is a quick, easy way to cook them, it also leeches much of the color from the vegetables. That's because the pigment that gives beets their color, called betain—also found in chard, amaranth, and prickly pear cactus—is highly water soluble. Covering and steaming the vegetable addresses that problem; adding an acid, such as vinegar or lemon juice, to the water helps, too. But Puck's method of roasting them also brings out the beets' natural sweetness. Just put five or six beets into a 9" x 13" baking dish, pour in about an inch of water (to keep the beets from drying out), cover the dish tightly with foil, and roast until a knife easily slides into the beets, about 1½ hours. —*Ben Mims*



Corn Tortillas

Supermarket corn tortillas, when steamed or griddled, make a fine canvas for the fish tacos on page 89 and the huevos rancheros on page 90. But try a tortilla made by hand using a tortilla press (see page 100 for a source), and you'll instantly taste the difference: fragrant, toasty, and supple, fresh tortillas are good enough to eat on their own. Here's how to make them. —*H.L.*



1 Make the corn masa: Put 1 cup masa harina into a bowl and make a well in center. Add ⅔ cup plus 1 tbsp. water to well and stir to form a dough.



2 Knead dough until it's soft but not sticky, achieving a consistency like that of Play-doh. Pinch off a palm-size piece (above) and roll it into a ball.



3 Cut two 7" circles out of a cleaned plastic shopping bag. Put 1 circle on a tortilla press. Arrange dough in center; top with second circle.



4 Push handle down on tortilla press to flatten the dough. For a thinner tortilla, shimmy the handle side to side while pressing down.



5 Open the press, remove the top piece of plastic, and transfer the tortilla to the palm of your hand, pulling off the second piece of plastic.



6 Cook the tortilla immediately in a cast-iron skillet over medium heat, flipping occasionally, until lightly toasted. Repeat with the remaining dough.

TODD COLEMAN (8)



Los Angeles Originals

We found an abundance of excellent local food products while putting together this special LA issue. Here are some of our favorites. The third-generation owners of **Graber Olive House** (1) still handpick their tree-ripened manzanillo olives on the land where founder C. C. Graber discovered olive trees in 1892. **E. Waldo Ward Seville orange marmalade** (2) has a history dating back to 1917, when Edwin Waldo Ward Sr. started selling his condiments to railroad dining cars. We love the tiny, garlicky **cocktail sausages from La Española Meats** (3). Among our favorite store-bought Mexican snacks are the 22 flavors of **Corn Maiden tamales** (4). **Nesbitt's Orange soda** (5), from an 85-year-old company, was reportedly a favorite of Elvis Presley's. Littlejohn's, a confectionery started in 1924, is still making superb **English toffee** (6). Handmade **Morning Glory Confections brittle** (7) comes in six flavors (the New Mexico Chile Pumpkin Seed variety is shown). The **burrata from Gioia Cheese Company** (8), owned by a third-generation cheese maker from Apulia, was the first of its kind made in the U.S. and is still the finest in town. The best-selling **Lawry's Seasoned Salt** (9) originated at the Los Angeles steak house Lawry's the Prime Rib. We think LA is home to the country's best **pastrami** (10), specifically the tender, hand-sliced brisket from Langer's Deli. Incendiary **Chichen Itza hot sauce** (11) (the chile kut variety is pictured) is made from an old family recipe. We adore the San Gabriel Valley–made **Sriracha** chile sauce (12), and we're not alone: 10 million bottles of the sweet-hot condiment are sold worldwide each year. When the communist government of East Germany seized the original company in the 1960s, the makers of **Krüegermann German-style mustard pickles** (13) moved to LA; we're glad they did. *–Mari Uyehara*

RECIPES BY CATEGORY

APPETIZERS

MAIN COURSES

Meat, Poultry, and Fish

Vegetarian

DRINKS

MISCELLANEOUS

The SAVEUR Chef Series

Chef JOHN DELUCIE's career is the stuff of fairy tales. Eighteen years ago he was toiling as a salesman by day and whipping up feasts for his family by night. Today, he helms the menu at the Waverly Inn, one of New York's most celebrated restaurants, dishing up dinner for luminaries like Robert De Niro and Gwyneth Paltrow. But DeLucie's Cinderella story has always been firmly rooted in food—a passion that he discovered in his Italian-American childhood and honed over years of study in some of the best kitchens in America and Europe. We caught up with chef DeLucie recently to talk about his creative approach to home-style cooking, the challenges and rewards of running a successful restaurant, and his long, strange trip to the top.



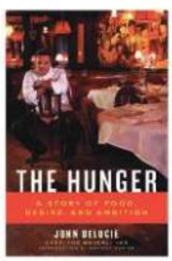
Was food a big part of your childhood?

I grew up in a tight-knit Italian family—the first thing my mother would say when I walked into the house was, "Did you eat?" My grandmothers and aunts were amazing cooks, so even though I didn't really cook with them as a kid, I was always around food. Later, when I lived on my own, I began to recreate some of the things I enjoyed as a kid, like pasta fagioli and spaghetti with cauliflower and garlic. Over time, I really honed my skills and then, when I moved to the city and got married, I continued cooking for fun.

Cooking is your second career. How did you make that transition?

I spent my 20s dazed and confused—working all kinds of sales jobs until I couldn't take another day. At that point, I really didn't know what I was going to do next, but because I loved cooking and took it seriously as a hobby, I thought maybe I could be a chef. On my way up through restaurants, I often wondered whether I had made a huge mistake. But I survived, and that's really when I started getting into the magic of cooking. Now, 18 years later, I am at the Waverly Inn, feeding Jay-Z and Bono. It's an incredible story.

Speaking of stories, you've just written a book about your life in the kitchen, titled *The Hunger*. Why write a memoir instead of a cookbook?



I figured the world didn't need another roast chicken recipe, and maybe my personal story had something more to offer. I never expected the response it's gotten. I've received so many postcards from people saying, "I just got laid off and I've always wanted to cook, and you make me feel like it might be possible."

The Waverly Inn's menu features a lot of elevated home-style dishes, like chicken pot pie and truffled macaroni and cheese. How would you describe your cooking philosophy?

I believe in using the best ingredients we can possibly find to make familiar, delicious dishes. People love comfort food like macaroni and cheese and pot pie, but they aren't used to encountering ones that are made from scratch, with all butter puff pastry on top and organic chicken inside. So when they do, it's an unlikely but pleasant surprise. It's definitely a challenge, though. No chef wants to be known only for macaroni and cheese. But the truth is that your skills show in the gratification on the faces of your diners and the success of your restaurant. And I see both of those every day, which feels great.

TRUFFLED MACARONI AND CHEESE

SERVES 6–8

- 1 lb. elbow macaroni or cavatappi
- 1 tbsp. table salt
- 5 tbsp. unsalted butter
- 6 tbsp. all-purpose flour
- 1 ½ tsp. powdered mustard
- ¼ tsp. cayenne pepper (optional)
- 5 cups milk
- 8 oz. Monterey Jack cheese, shredded (2 cups)
- 8 oz. sharp cheddar cheese, shredded (2 cups)
- 1 tsp. table salt
- 1 fresh truffle or white truffle oil, to taste

1. Adjust oven rack to lower-middle position and heat broiler. Bring 4 quarts water to boil in Dutch oven over high heat. Add macaroni and 1 tbsp. salt; cook until pasta is tender. Drain pasta and set aside in colander.

2. In now-empty Dutch oven, heat butter over medium-high heat until foaming. Add flour, mustard, and cayenne (if using) and whisk well to combine. Continue whisking until mixture becomes fragrant and deepens in color, about 1 minute. Gradually whisk in milk; bring mixture to boil, whisking constantly (mixture must reach full boil to fully thicken). Reduce heat to medium and simmer, whisking occasionally, until thickened to consistency of heavy cream, about 5 minutes. Off heat, whisk in cheeses and 1 tsp. salt until cheeses are fully melted. Add pasta and cook over medium-low heat, stirring constantly, until mixture is steaming and heated through, about 6 minutes.

3. Transfer mixture to broiler-safe 9" × 13" baking dish and broil until deep golden brown, 3 to 5 minutes, rotating pan if necessary for even browning. Cool about 5 minutes, then serve.

4. Shave seasonal truffles or drizzle white truffle oil over each serving.

FROM TOP: MARK ABRAHAMS; *THE HUNGER* COVER PHOTOGRAPH BY TONY CENICOLA

THE PANTRY

A Guide to Resources

In producing the stories for this issue, we discovered ingredients and information too good to keep to ourselves. Please feel free to raid our pantry!

BY BEN MIMS

Fare

Visit **Kyochon**'s Koreatown branch (3833 West Sixth Street; 213/739-9292; www.kyochon.com/usa) to try its Korean-style fried chicken. Purchase LA-made hot sauce from **Tapatío** ($24 for a case of twenty-four 5-ounce bottles; 323/587-8933; www.tapatio.com). Try the puka punch at the **Tiki-Ti** (4427 West Sunset Boulevard; 323/669-9381) in the Los Feliz neighborhood. Buy Moraga Vineyard's **2005 Bel Air Estate Red** ($125) and **2007 Bel Air Estate White** ($65) from Wally's Wine and Spirits (888/992-5597; www.wallywine.com).



Los Angeles

Dine at **Spago** (176 North Canon Drive, Beverly Hills; 310/385-0880) to sample innovative Wolfgang Puck dishes like beet and goat cheese napoleons. At **Pizzeria Mozza** (641 North Highland Avenue; 323/297-0101) in West Hollywood, order the excellent squash blossom pizza. For authentic Thai cooking in the heart of Hollywood, visit **Ganda** (5269 Hollywood Boulevard; 323/466-4281). For **Suzanne Goin**'s French-inspired California-grown food, visit Lucques (8474 Melrose Avenue; 323/655-6277). Enjoy a Mexican breakfast of huevos rancheros in the Highland Park neighborhood at **La Abeja** (3700 North Figueroa Street; 323/221-0474). To feast on exquisite dim sum in the San Gabriel Valley, visit **Elite Restaurant** (700 South Atlantic Boulevard, Monterey Park; 626/282-9998). For great Mexican and Central American food, visit these neighborhood favorites: **Guelaguetza** (three locations in LA; www.guelaguetzarestaurante.com); **El 7 Mares La Playita** (3131 West Sunset Boulevard; 323/665-0865) in Silver Lake; **El Tepeyac Cafe** (812 North Evergreen Avenue; 323/268-1960) in East LA; **Pal Cabrón** (2560 East Gage Avenue; 323/277-9899) in Huntington Park; **Tamales Liliana's** (4629 East Cesar E. Chavez Avenue; 323/780-0989) near Belvedere Park; and **Ciros** (705 North Evergreen Avenue; 323/269-5104), also in East LA. For hearty vegetarian fare, go to **Elf** (2135 West Sunset Boulevard; 213/484-6829), just west of Echo Park. Eat at **Original Pantry Café** (877 South Figueroa Street; 213/972-9279) for classic diner fare in Downtown. Visit the **Oyster House Saloon** (12446 Moorpark Street, Studio City; 818/761-8686) for the frogs' legs and manhattans. To try authentic *pupusas* in the Westlake neighborhood, go to **Evita's Pupuseria Salvadoreña** (2015 Wilshire Boulevard; 213/484-5009). Visit the **Bazaar** by José Andrés in the SLS Hotel at Beverly Hills (465 South La Cienega Boulevard; 310/246-5555) to experience Andrés's traditional and modern Spanish cuisine. Eat at **La Casita Mexicana** (4030 East Gage Avenue, Bell; 323/773-1898), just outside LA, to sample dishes made with produce from the Stanford-Avalon Community Garden. In West Hollywood, Evan Kleiman's **Angeli Caffe** (7274 Melrose Avenue; 323/936-9086) serves lemon–garlic chicken and other rustic Italian specialties. Take a drive down the coast to Huntington Beach (or ride in on a wave) for breakfast at **Sugar Shack** (213 ½ Main Street; 714/536-0355). Stop by the **Beverly Hills Hotel** for a meal in the Polo Lounge (9641 Sunset Boulevard; 310/887-2777).

Recipes

To prepare Ruth Honegger's spicy eggplant spread (see page 86), purchase **black onion seeds**, available from Kalustyan's ($6.99 for a 4-ounce pack; look for "kalunji"; 800/352-3451; www.kalustyans.com). Purchase **raw hemp seeds**, available from Bob's Red Mill Natural Foods ($11.99 for a 12-ounce bag; 800/349-2173; www.bobsredmill.com), to make Elf's kale salad (see page 86). To make Liang's Kitchen's noodles with fried scallions (see page 89), use **Asian wheat noodles**, available from Rossi Pasta ($6 for a 12-ounce pack; look for "Asian noodle linguini"; 800/227-6774; www.rossipasta.com). Use **udon noodles** (pictured at left), available at Organic Direct ($1.49 for a 12.8-ounce pack; 718/451-2828; www.organicdirect.com), to make Off the Shelf's crispy duck with udon noodles (see page 89). To prepare our Korean-style fried chicken (see page 90), purchase **Korean chile paste** from Sid Wainer & Son ($21.99 for a 500-gram jar; look for "chili" paste; 888/743-9246; www.sidwainer.com). To prepare Suzanne Goin's Moroccan chicken with carrot purée (see page 90), buy **harissa**, available from ChefShop.com ($9.89 for a 10-ounce jar; 800/596-0885; www.chefshop.com). To make *pupusas* (see page 92), use Maseca brand **masa harina**, available from MexGrocer.com ($7.95 for a 4.4-pound bag; 877/463-9476; www.mexgrocer.com). To make Pizzeria Mozza's squash blossom pizza (see page 92), use **burrata**, available from Gioia Cheese ($6.99 per pound; 626/444-6015; www.gioiacheeseinc.com), and **squash blossoms** (pictured at left), available from Melissa's/World Variety Produce (prices vary by availability; 800/588-0151; www.melissas.com). To make Tiki-Ti's puka punch (see page 92), purchase **passion fruit syrup**, available from the Beverage Gourmet ($6.75 for a 750-milliliter bottle; 970/215-8690; www.thebeveragegourmet.com) and **falernum liqueur** (pictured at left), available from D&M Wines and Liquors ($20.99 for a 750-milliliter bottle; 800/637-0292; www.dandm.com).

Kitchen

A cast-iron **tortilla press** can be purchased at Pendery's ($9.99 for a 7-inch press; 800/533-1870; www.penderys.com). Purchase some of our favorite LA-made products: **olives** from Graber Olive House ($41.45 for four 7.5-ounce cans; 800/996-5483; www.graberolives.com), **marmalade** from E. Waldo Ward ($5.20 for a 10-ounce jar; 800/355-9273; www.waldoward.com), **cocktail sausages** from La Española Meats ($8.60 for a 1-pound bag; 310/539-0455; www.laespanolameats.com), **tamales** from Corn Maiden (prices vary by type; 310/784-0400; www.cornmaidenfoods.com), **Nesbitt's orange soda** from Galco's Soda Pop Stop ($1.85 per bottle; 323/255-7115; www.sodapopstop.com), **English toffee** from Littlejohn's Candies ($19.95 for a 1-pound box; 323/936-5379; www.littlejohnscandies.com), creative **brittles** from Morning Glory Confections ($5 for a 2-ounce box; 323/662-2963; www.morninggloryconfections.foodzie.com), **burrata** from Gioia Cheese (see recipe listing at left), **pastrami** from Langer's ($20 per pound; 213/483-8050; www.langersdeli.com), **chile kut habanero hot sauce**, from Chichen Itza ($5 for a 4-ounce jar; 213/741-1075), **Huy Fong sriracha sauce** from Grocery Thai ($3.50 for a 17-ounce bottle; 818/469-9407; www.grocerythai.com), and **Kruëgermann pickles** from Culinary District (about $5 per jar, depending on variety; 877/641-2661; www.culinarydistrict.com).

TODD COLEMAN (3)

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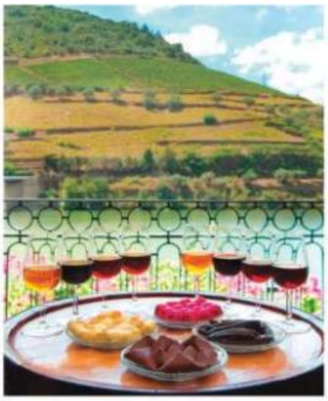


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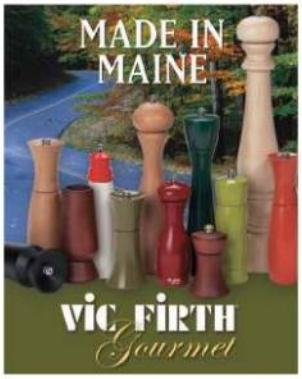


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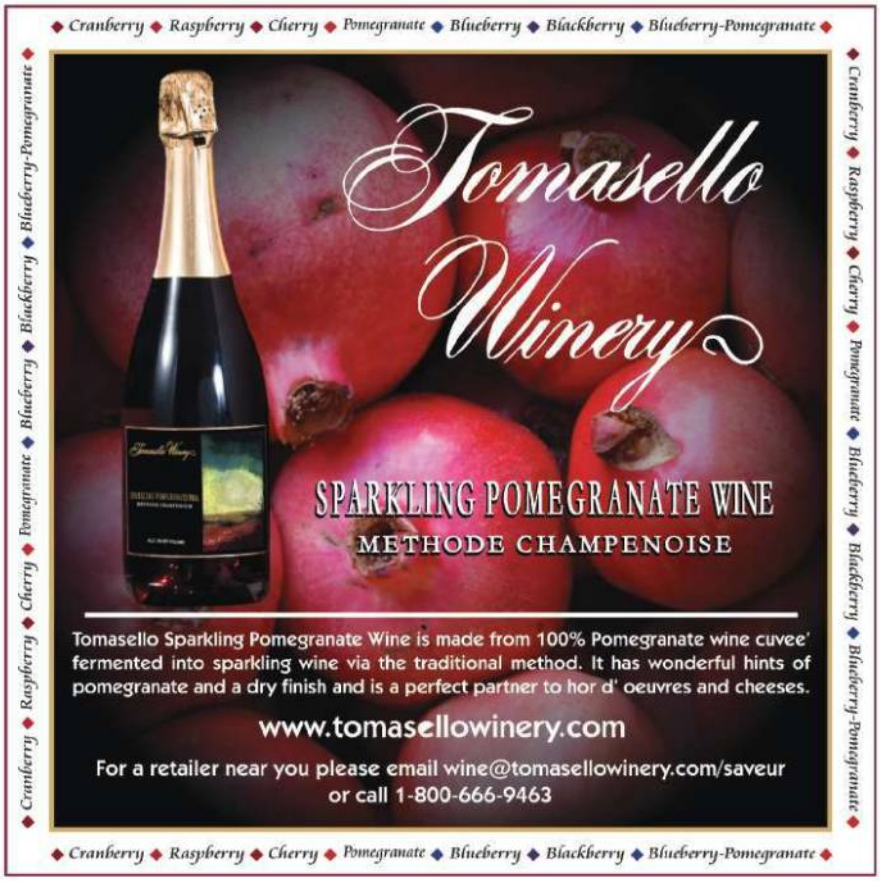


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The actors Basil Rathbone and Angela Lansbury take a break from shooting The Court Jester, *a musical comedy released in 1955, to have lunch at the Paramount Studios Commissary, where the dress code is strictly come-as-you-are.*

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